Literary representations of maternity in the eighteenth century

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Abstract.

The primary concern of this thesis is the representation, in the eighteenth century, of mothers' bodies. It is also concerned with the treatment of domestic duties which were supposed a consequence of a woman's very nature. Throughout the first seven decades of the century, medical men and virtuosi demonstrated particular interest in the nature of physicality, and especially in women's bodies, pregnancy, and childbirth. I will be testing out a widely-held view that dissection and new anatomical findings regarding women's bodies produced a new idealisation of motherhood, and that this was immediately translated into lay-medical and related discourse, and was thus firmly established in middle-class culture by the end of the century.

The relationship between primary medical and lay-medical literature raises several questions: my work asks whether lay-medical literature mirrored medical writing, and whether there was a direct translation of material from one to the other. Lay-medical texts for women are especially interesting. They offer an insight into precisely what examples of female nature and correspondingly 'natural' behaviour were intended for women readers.

Representations of maternity in specific forms of writing which rely heavily upon women for subject matter are further extended in the second half of this study. I have focussed upon two genres, conduct literature and narrative fiction. Neither is conventionally associated with medical or lay-medical discourse, yet both have significant links with these. Conduct literature and narrative fiction have much to offer in this attempt to recover what *women* were being taught about their bodies and roles: both were concerned with what the body displays externally, and with corresponding ideas of 'naturalness'. Conduct literature for women was enjoying a period of growth and change, and has obvious, direct links with medical texts. Narrative fiction also had important links with medical writing, and I will describe these. The dissemination of medical representations of the maternal body was a process which contributed to a contradictory cultural sense of female identity.

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Contents.

This thesis has not previously been submitted in this or any other University.

Abbreviations in the Text.

The following abbreviations are used in the main body of the thesis text:

Cl. - Samuel Richardson. Clarissa, Or, The history of a young lady: comprehending the most important concerns of private life. And particularly shewing the distresses that may attend the misconduct both of parents and children, in relation to marriage. Published by the editor of Pamela. 1747-1748; Angus Ross, Ed. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1985.

D.M. - William Buchan. Domestic Medicine; or, a Treatise on the Prevention and Cure of Diseases by a Regimen and Simple Medicines. 1769; 2nd ed. London: W. Strahan and T. Cadell, 1772.

E.C.L. - Fenela Ann Childs. 'Prescriptions for Manners in English Courtesy Literature, 1690-1760, and their Social Implications.' Ph.D. thesis, Oxford Univ., 1984.

E.G. - James Nelson. An Essay on the Government of Children, Under Three General Heads: viz Health, Manners and Education. 1753; 2nd ed. London: R. and J. Dodsley, 1756.

E.N.M.C. - William Cadogan. An Essay upon the Nursing and Management of Children from their Birth to Three Years of Age. 1748; 9th ed. London: Robert Horsfield, 1769.

F.Q. - Henry Brooke. The Fool of Quality; or The History of Henry, Earl of Moreland. 1765-1770; 2nd ed. London: W. Johnston, 1767-1770.

G.M. - The Gentleman's Magazine. 1731-1732: Edward Cave et al, Eds. as The Gentleman's Magazine and Traders' Monthly Intelligencer. 1733. The Gentleman's Magazine and Monthly Intelligencer. 1734-1735. The Gentleman's Magazine and Historical Chronicle. 1736-1833. The Gentleman's Magazine. 1834-1921. London: F. Jeffries et al.

L.G. - George Savile, first Marquis of Halifax. The Lady's New-years Gift: Or, Advice To A Daughter. 1688; 3rd ed. London: M. Gillyflower and J. Partridge, 1688.

L.L. - Richard Steele, Ed. The Ladies Library. Written by a Lady. London: Jacob Tonson, 1714

M.F. - Daniel Defoe. The Fortunes and Misfortunes of the Famous Moll Flanders. 1722; 2nd ed. London: John Brotherton, 1722.

O.E.D. - J.A. Simpson and E.S.C. Weiner ., Eds. Oxford English Dictionary. 1933; rev. 2nd ed. 20 vols. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989.

P. - Samuel Richardson. Pamela: or, Virtue Rewarded. In a series of Familiar Letters from a Beautiful Young Damsel, to her Parents. Now first published In order to cultivate the Principles of Virtue and Religion in the Minds of the Youth of Both Sexes. 1740-1741; 2nd ed. Dublin: R. Reilly, 1741.

P.T. - The Royal Society of London. Philosophical Transactions. Giving some Accompt of the Present Undertakings, Studies and Labours, of the Ingenious. Facs. ed. New York: Johnson Reprint Corp., 1963.

R. - Daniel Defoe. The Fortunate Mistress: or, A History of the Life and Vast Variety of Fortunes of Mademoiselle de Beleau, Afterwards call'd The Countess de Wintelsheim, in Germany. Being the Person known by the Name of the Lady Roxana, in the Time of King Charles II. 1724; Facs. ed. Edinburgh: Constable and Co. Ltd., 1983.

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Chapter One.

The Eighteenth-Century Medical Treatment of Maternity, and how Medical Findings were Disseminated in Lay-Medical Literature.

Introduction.

At first glance, the five distinct forms of writing which will be the subject of this Chapter make a rather unlikely combination. I propose to show how early and mid eighteenth-century primary medical writing, a collection of ladies' magazines, household cookbooks, household health manuals, and midwifery texts for female operators produced during the first six or so decades of the eighteenth century, represent maternity. Numerous differences, of course, exist between them, but an important factor uniting all is that each can be considered to have been a medical or lay-medical text, published with the intention of informing the reader about the human body. I am not principally concerned, however, with a random choice of whatever happened to be on the dissecting table: the specific body under discussion in these texts is that of the mother.

Moral philosophy, and its alliance with the interests of literature at the time has been isolated by Janet Todd in her explanation of the eighteenth-century sentimental impulse.[1] The cult of sensibility during the same period is of importance in this thesis because the treatment of maternity obviously overlaps thematically with the ideas of chastity, feeling and compassion which are strongly associated with female sensibility. One of the aims of this thesis will be to distinguish what the treatment of the mother's body contributes to an idea of sensibility which is based upon idealised representations of the female, and which similarly relies upon physical signs to offer evidence of the woman's virtue. Todd has claimed that moral philosophy was largely responsible for new ideas of sentimentality, and that through fiction, these touched the perceptions of

[1] Janet Todd, *Sensibility:An Introduction*, (London, 1986), p.3.

most literate and semi-literate people in England.[2] A central focus of this thesis is that medical representations of the mother's body had a very important part to play in the creation of a new set of ideas which account for human nature and which re-order society. Later Chapters will also re-examine the role played by lay-medical and the literature of conduct, as well as alternatives offered by narrative fiction, in explanations for human behaviour which go beyond those given by Christian dogma.

The parameters for this study - a period of some seventy years beginning in the first decade of the eighteenth century - have been established as the result of a combination of factors. The 1700s have been chosen as a starting point partly because they saw the beginning of male interest in the field of obstetrics. Medical writing which reflects this new interest is abundant. Unprecedented advances in this field were made during the subsequent decades: Robert Couper, a physician writing in 1789, enthusiastically described the advances made to that date as a splendid "body of facts and new experiments."[3] One of William Hunter's lengthy lectures attributed important "daily" advances made during the eighteenth century in particular, to the use of improved microscopes and equipment, and to techniques for better and clearer preservation of flesh, such as Dr.Nicholls' wax moulding.[4] "No part of physiology is more interesting, or has excited greater attention, than that which treats of parturition", added another.[5]

The period in question also saw an especially prolific output of conduct literature and related writing.[6] Edward Cave's *Gentleman's Magazine* set a new vogue in periodical publications, and there were important changes in the contents of household cookbooks by the middle of the century. Special concessions for the reading capabilities, interests, and understanding of children found a market during the fourth

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[2] Ibid. pp.3-4.

[3] Robert Couper, *Speculations on the Mode and Appearances of Impregnation in the Human Female*, (Edinburgh, 1789), p.13.

[4] William Hunter, *Two Introductory Lectures*, (London, 1784), p.41. Hunter contrasts eighteenth-century activity with the difficulty of procuring a body for dissection during the beginning of the seventeenth century.

[5] Robert Bland, *Observations on Human and on Comparative Parturition*, (London, 1794), introduction, xi. Although the publication date of this text is 1794, Bland was aged 64 years when he wrote it, and had probably been collecting his information during a career which began around 1750-1755. He affirms this breadth of experience on p.214.

[6] *E.C.L.*, Abstract.

decade of the period: accordingly, children's literature will help to shed light upon expectations within the domestic arena in the second Chapter of this thesis.[7] The final Chapters are concerned with domestic fiction which developed distinct characteristics that distinguished it from eighteenth-century Romance fiction during this time. Whilst a significant mother figure does not feature in many works of fiction, the behaviour of surrogate mothers will be explored in Chapter Three. Chapter Four raises further questions about how far medical information can be seen as having informed the depictions of a number of examples of mother figures in a selection of works of narrative fiction.

The exploration of eighteenth-century primary medical material in this Chapter compares the treatment of the mother's body with that in lay-medical writing. The selection of lay-medical literature within this Chapter, and those writings which provide further significant representations of the maternal body in later Chapters, could all be termed 'popular'. My use of the term 'popular' in this thesis is intended to indicate the relative breadth or inclusiveness of the intended audience of these various forms of lay-medical discourse. Any modern commentator runs obvious risks in attempting to conflate imagined readerships: at the same time, the evidence offered by texts themselves concerning their intended readers ought not to be dismissed. The audiences solicited in the cases of household health texts, cookery manuals, periodicals, midwifery texts written by women, conduct literature, and narrative fiction were generally perceived as marginal to the elite class at the top of the hierarchical social scale. I use the term, therefore, to signify a publication intended to interest audiences relatively heterogeneous with regard to social class and educational status.[8]

In view of the amount of surviving literature, a time period of more than seventy to eighty years would not have been feasible for study. A shorter span would not have allowed room for meaningful analysis of historical and cultural developments, given the time required for the collecting of information in an exploration of this nature. Of

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[7] For a fuller discussion of the growth in children's literature during the period, see S. Roscoe, *John Newbery and his Successors*, (Hertfordshire, 1973).

[8] See, for further discussion of the audience of women's periodicals in particular, Kathryn Shevelow, *Women in Print Culture*, (London, 1989).

course, some modern historians have already looked to the medical world in their attempts to explain patterns of eighteenth-century domestic and social change. Ludmilla Jordanova's theory about late eighteenth-century domestic order rests upon the idea that bio-medical ideas regarding motherhood migrated quickly from medical writing to multifarious forms of popular literature, and that in this way medical findings helped to produce, and underpin, social change.[9] Valerie Fildes provides another example: she, too, shares my interest in the effects of medical thinking upon maternal roles. By way of contrast, however, Fildes places strident and rather exclusive emphasis upon a view of the medical recognition of the values of colostrum, and locates this as the source of changes in the mother's role.[10] It is the differences and tensions between orthodox medical writings, and lay texts which sought to advise growing numbers of readers about matters particularly relating to fertility and the care of children, which will be the subject of this Chapter.

The major preoccupation of the first part of this Chapter is the way in which the mother's body and the pregnant uterus are depicted during a period of intense anatomical curiosity. An exploration of pictorial representations of the gravid uterus, and of how medical discourse treated and lent meaning to the language which denoted the female body, will be followed by a consideration of how anatomical investigations were popularised. How far and in what ways these 'pictures' and findings concerning the female role in human reproduction and the 'exposed' gravid uterus were reaching a reading public will also be discussed.

The position of the child's body in relation to its mother is significant. Although as single subjects, motherhood and childhood, and the meanings associated with the bodies of each, have been much scrutinised in recent years, it seems to me that consideration of the two in isolation from each other fails to recover certain possibilities

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[9] Ludmilla Jordanova, 'Naturalising the Family', in L.J. Jordanova, Ed. *Languages of Nature*, (London, 1983), pp.86-116.

[10] Valerie Fildes, *Breasts, Bottles and Babies*, (Edinburgh, 1986). Fildes' claim that Mauriceau heralded this change in thinking about colostrum, which is at the root of eighteenth-century social changes, seems to be inaccurate in its interpretation of Mauriceau's views on breastfeeding. Mauriceau's two main works, *The Accomplisht Midwife*, (London, 1673), p.364, and *The Diseases of Women with Child*, 1681; 2nd ed., (London, 1696), p.365, urge the mother not to feed her child herself for at least a week after its birth. This view is opposed to the one central to Fildes' argument, which is that only the natural mother was deemed able to feed her own infant.

in their interrelation.[11] These possibilities are an integral part of an eighteenth-century view of the domestic sphere. My exploration of the treatment of maternity and physicality necessarily involves consideration of the child's body originating within, and as part of that of, the mother. In addition to this, there will be some discussion of incidences when the bodies of mother and child are shown as indistinct from each other. Another aspect of this is the use of codified behaviour which renders the female adult status indeterminate from that of the child. Lastly, in the light of conclusions drawn from these examinations, the consequences of popularising bio-medical findings, and their influence upon thinking about maternity, will be considered. Each of the forms of writing to be considered here evolves in some sense as an arena for the introduction, discussion, and sometimes manipulation of findings in the inquiry into the female generative role. The aim of this Chapter is to explore how medical and lay writing served to represent maternity, and how this lent shape to a female gender-identity.

i. Growing Eighteenth-Century Interest in the Female Body.

Because the core concern of the first part of this Chapter will be a selection of those medical texts which deal specifically with the female body, it would be useful, at this point, briefly to locate their place in the historical progress of medical writing. For our purposes, this consideration will concentrate upon the beginning of a period of medical enlightenment in which technological advances greatly assisted the practice of dissection, that is, commencing around the second half of the seventeenth century.

The year 1653 marked the progress made by William Harvey in the understanding of fundamental concepts underlying the system of human circulation, and also of respiration.[12] Two years later, The Royal Society of London began publishing their *Philosophical Transactions,* providing further space for and fuelling

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[11] Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800*, 1977; 2nd ed., (Harmondsworth, 1979); Philippe Ariés, *Centuries of Childhood*, 1960; Tr. Robert Baldick, (Harmondsworth, 1986).

[12] William Harvey, *The Anatomical Exercises ... Concerning the Motion of the Heart and Blood*, (London, 1653).

numerous scientific debates. In its first volume, the introduction is unspecific about the occupations of its readers: interested parties are simply invited to partake in the debates about scientific phenomena within its pages:

> "... and those addicted to and conversant in such matters, may be invited and encouraged to search, try, and find out new things, impart their knowledge to one another, and contribute what they can to the Grand design of improving Natural knowledge, and perfecting all Philosophical Arts, and Sciences ."[13]

Knowledge of many other important concepts concerning the living body was built up during the course of the eighteenth century. In conjunction with this, the study of anatomy evolved as an essential part of the undergraduate's academic diet, regardless of his discipline. Attendance at anatomists' theatres for the observation of dissection was almost exclusively male. The use of Latin for many original medical publications would also have helped to ensure that scientific medical information was significantly limited to interested, comfortably-off male readers and library members.[14] In particular, theories about nutrition and digestion received considerable attention, and plenty of advice was offered in periodicals, health, and childcare manuals. Information and advice sometimes varied, and the selection of foods under discussion was comprehensive. It included the amazing benefits incurred by eating lentil pottage and the damage which fruit could do to children's health.[15] The interest which Samuel Richardson took in his own diet provides an example of a growing fashion for seeking private medical advice about nutrition: his corpulent figure was the subject of a great deal of correspondence with the celebrated Bath physician, George Cheyne, who tried, over a period of almost ten years, to persuade Richardson to give up eating meat.[16]

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[13] *P.T.*, I, Introduction, A1.

[14] Latin and Greek were not considered appropriate for girls or women to study. Evidence of this is suggested by the treatment of Fanny Burney's Eugenia in *Camilla*, 1796; E.A. Bloom and L.D. Bloom, Eds. (London, 1989). Eugenia's unorthodox Classical education contributes to her unmarriageable status, and to her public reception as a freakish curiosity. *E.C.L.*, p.215, quotes Fielding's *Conversations*, pp. 144-145, in which he states that the classics should never be mentioned before the ladies.

[15] There is probably some truth in this claim about the reviving nutritional properties of lentils. In *The Cranks Recipe Book*, (London, 1982), p.25, lentils are described as being exceptionally high in protein.

[16] T.C.D. Eaves and B.D. Kimpel, *Samuel Richardson:A Biography*, (Oxford, 1971), pp.154, 513, 526.

Progress made in the understanding of the systems of the human body was aided by unprecedented means of magnified examination. The microscope was developed, and its use became relatively widespread within a class of people who could afford one, and not simply limited to serious medical investigation.[17] Many well-to-do women made a hobby out of looking at plant life through microscopes, and this is borne out by the discussion of its benefits in the pages of magazines such as Eliza Haywood's *The Female Spectator*.[18] There is also evidence which suggests that plants were not the only non-human source of biological information. The quest for knowledge amongst medical men involved the live dissection of "all creatures", including cows, lizards, horses and birds, in addition to the corpses of some patients.[19] It seems that even the family pet proved too tempting to certain virtuosi locked in fierce debate after dinner. Robert Hooke, curator to the Royal Society and one-time assistant to Robert Boyle, allowed his own dog to fall victim to an impromptu experiment. After the crockery had been hurriedly cleared from the dinner table, the lungs of the hapless animal were cut into, and the movements of the chest wall closely observed.[20]

An extensive corpus of medical writing produced during the period suggests that a great deal of interest was vested in the exploration of biological systems. Dissection and the observation and study of anatomy were the chief means by which these investigations were facilitated. Some anatomists even regarded dissection as the only reliable method of investigation and, because the findings of dissection were being regarded as visible proof for new theories, they even saw them as a modern technique. One presents his findings in an address to the President of the College of Physicians, and offers the use of the technique as verification of his thoroughly modern practice:

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[17] Londa Schiebinger, *The Mind Has No Sex?*, (Cambridge, Mass., 1989), pp.36-41; James McCormick, *Eighteenth Century Microscopes*, (Lincolnwood, 1987), pp.9, 41.
[18] *The Female Spectator*, Eliza Haywood, Ed. (London, 1744-1746), III, 107.
[19] Harvey, op.cit., p.4; Bryan Robinson, *A Dissertation on the Food and Discharges of Human Bodies*, (Dublin, 1748), p.107.
[20] Michael Foster, *Lectures on the History of Physiology*, (London, 1901), p.180.

> I do not professe to learn and teach Anatomy from the axioms of Philosophers, but from Dissections, and from the fabrick of Nature.[21]

Accounts of dissection invite the reader to see proof by "occular [sic] demonstration", and despite a lack of diagrams and pictures in many of these texts, images of what is upon the dissection table are often constructed using language.[22] Anatomists' accounts are painstakingly detailed, and many follow a pattern of creating a two-dimensional picture through describing and itemising whatever can be seen. During the period, physical measurements, consistencies, colours, and proportions are carefully recorded; minute sections of the body are examined at any one time. All of these physical details are considered when conclusions are drawn about the purpose and function of the organ or system in question. This feature distinguishes the publications of this period from many medical and midwifery texts produced before the last twenty years or so of the seventeenth century.

Women's bodies are a particular focus for the attention of the medical world during a time of intense curiosity about the human body. The increase in male involvement in the management of the female body and its reproductive capacity evolved from the wider debate and search for knowledge respecting the beginnings of the human form itself. This provides an historical backdrop to, and offers further possible explanation for, the particular critical attention paid to the pregnant female body by medical men. Questions about the 'true nature' and origins of mankind were being voiced by a society which was increasingly challenging classical notions about human origin. The human body was being looked to for evidence of natural and rational order. Harvey is in no doubt about where such information ought to be sought, and his enthusiasm for the investigation of the uterus in particular is echoed in the preoccupation of many medical writers of the eighteenth century. Harvey states, in the preface to *The Anatomical Exercitations Concerning the Generation of Living Creatures*, that the most obvious place to start an inquiry into the nature of being is the "mothers [sic] belly " in order that :

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[21] Harvey, op.cit., Address to Dr Argent, 4.
[22] Ibid. Dedicatory, 3.

> ... thence we may attain to some infallible knowledge of each faculty of the formative and vegetative soul, by the effects of it; and of the nature of the soul itselfe, by the parts, or organs of the body, and their functions.[23]

A focus for philosophical inquiry was provided, in the late seventeenth century, by what Locke termed "originals" and "beginnings".[24] Concurrent ideas concerning the origins of the human state, generation, and the respective roles of male and female underwent successive reviews. During the 1730s and '40s, animalculist theories, which attribute the major generative source to the male, temporarily provide a challenge to the ovist theory which places the primary generative onus upon the female.[25] Despite the furious pace of inquiry, however, by the end of the century this and other matters pertaining to the generation of new life remained to a large extent unresolved: Mary Wollstonecraft admits that even in the last decade of the century, "with respect to the formation of the foetus in the womb, we are very ignorant."[26]

A specific period, beginning in the 1720s, witnessed significant new opportunities for members of the male medical world: this was because a 'new' medical discipline began to grow out of what had previously been regarded as a private area of 'healthcare' which had been wholly organised and controlled by women.[27] A large collection of medical documentation which is exclusively concerned with the female body reflects a period of fierce new competition between the different attendants available to assist with childbirth. The services of the traditional female midwife - often entirely untrained even if she was licensed by the Church - were challenged by newly-interested male operators. Medical men offered attractive and, in terms of the

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[23] Ibid. Preface, 7.

[24] John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, 1690; Peter Nidditch, Ed. (Oxford, 1979).

[25] Elisabeth Gasking, *Investigations into Generation, 1651-1828*, (London, 1967), p.171. See also Harvey, op.cit., p.1, for an outline of how the first particle of the future foetus was supposed to come from the blood in the uterus; also George Cheyne, *The English Malady*, (London, 1733), p.96, and Henry Bracken, *The Midwife's Companion*, (London, 1737), p.12, for the animalculist point of view.

26 Mary Wollstonecraft, *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, London, 1792; M. Brody, Ed. (Harmondsworth, 1985), p.164.

[27] Arturo Castiglioni, *The History of Medicine*, (New York, 1941), pp.504-577; Guy Williams, *The Age of Agony: The Art of Healing*, (London, 1975), p.25.

safety of mother and child, unrivalled services to their clients. Their management of pregnancy and childbirth, they argued, was informed by detailed knowledge of human reproductive biology and of the female anatomy. Only male operators had access to, and the necessary skills to operate, the newly-publicised forceps, a tool which had remained the guarded secret of the aggrandising Chamberlen family for several generations. Moreover, publications such as Dr Burton's account of 1733 describing his version of the forceps, and William Gifford's accompanying illustrations in 1734, would almost certainly have helped to precipitate this growth.[28]

Fashion was one factor which may account for changes in the sex of the birth attendant acquired for, to take an example, a merchant's wife. It is unlikely that this trend for a male attendant developed without some improvements in the fate of mother and child in certain cases of particular difficulty, however. Physiological reasons help to explain why the male attendant, equipped with his forceps and other tools, quickly managed to gain much freer access to the delivery room. Hidden pelvic deformity was as common as the disease which produced it, rickets, and the variety and frequency of popular preventative advice reveals how little was known either about its prevention or cure. Parisian physician Baudeloque's specialist text, *Two Memoirs on the Cesarean Operation*, recalls with candour the horrific dangers posed by the deformities in the mother's pelvis which were the result of rickets. He had been involved in countless difficult births of this kind during a career spanning several decades.[29] Rich also points out that the attractive fees to be earned in the practice of obstetrics must have encouraged the interest and involvement of medical men.[30] Certainly John Douglas's furious criticism of "too many" male operators who could be called to an emergency, and who "at first would not attempt any thing without a sum of money was laid down",

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[28] John Burton, *An Essay towards a Complete New System of Midwifery*, (London, 1751), p.284, figs.1, 5.

[29] Jean Louis Baudelocque, *Two Memoirs on the Cesarean Operation*, 1798; Tr. John Hull, (Manchester, 1801). This memoir consists of the accounts of 73 operations, performed in France and in the North West of England between 1750 and 1799.

[30] Adrienne Rich, *Of Woman Born*, (London, 1977), pp.128-155. The term 'obstetrics' is used here for brevity and clarity in describing a field of formal medicine which embraces the study of human reproduction, pregnancy, childbirth and post-natal care. Although this field expanded as a concern of medical men during the third and fourth decades of the eighteenth century, the *O.E.D* states that it was not until 1819 that the term 'obstetrics' was used to mean the branch of medical practice which deals with parturition.

reinforces the authenticity of Rich's suggetion.[31] Although it is impossible to quantify the degree to which each of these features influenced this change in the supervison of pregnancy, by the early years of the 1740s, obstetrics had become the most prestigious and advanced of medical fields, one in which "every young Surgeon now intends practising."[32] The tone of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's letter of April 1748, addressed to her husband and concerning the "immense fortunes" to be made in this field, barely conceals her displeasure that this was also one of the most profitable areas of medicine.[33]

ii. Maternity and the Medical Texts.

The medical texts themselves are an obvious starting point for this study. The writing of eighteenth-century medical men attempted to establish the initial physical relation between the woman's body and the commencement of new human life, largely through empirical means. As doctors began to be admitted where female midwives had been exclusively in charge, many new medical writings catalogue investigations into the relation between the bodies of the mother and her unborn child. One notable feature of this is that descriptions are conveyed using highly detailed measurements which emphasize the physical proximity of mother and child. I have rarely found this sort of detail equalled in a selection of comparative studies of different parts of the male body.[34] It contributes to questions about why the female body is often treated very differently from the male by anatomists.

Also significant is the lack of evidence of anything other than a totally dispassionate stance taken with regard to the medical investigation of the male body. Ephraim Chambers' scientific encyclopædia of 1727, and *The Encyclopædia Britannica* (1768) suggest that, as these works increasingly began to reflect wider yet more precise

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31 John Douglas, *A Short Account of the State of Midwifery in London*, (London, 1736), p.24.
32 Benjamin Pugh, *A Treatise of Midwifery*, (London, 1754), Preface, i.
33 Robert Halsband, Ed., *The Complete Letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu*, (Oxford, 1966), II, 397.
34 William Cheselden, *The Anatomy of the Humane Body*, (London, 1713), pp.161-165; Dale Ingram, *Practical Cases and Observations in Surgery*, (London, 1751), p.6; Michael Spakher and J. Remilinus, *The Anatomy of the Bodies of Man and Woman*, 1675; Clopton Havers, Ed. (London, 1702).

scientific concerns, the term 'woman' finally earned a place in them.[35] Harris's first scientific encyclopædia made no reference to the 'woman.' This possibly indicates that the different qualities of the female body were not considered significant enough to warrant a special mention. By the third decade of the eighteenth-century, however, the woman is distinguished by a special - although very brief - entry.[36] In this way, 'woman' was deemed a scientifically accurate term in the same way as 'man' had been in the first scientific encyclopædia of 1704.[37] In addition to this, mid-century scientific encyclopædia begin to distinguish and use the word 'mother' to distinguish between a woman who has produced a child, and one who has not. Despite this move towards scientific accuracy, however, the male body is consistently referred to in my choice of sample texts as 'the man', 'the male', or simply 'the body'. Anatomists' references to the female body are not always correspondingly 'scientific'. The term 'mother' is sometimes used, yet its use is not simply reserved for the woman who has produced a child. There are differences between the use of the term 'woman' and that of 'mother' in medical descriptions: this Chapter is concerned with this linguistic discrepancy. I propose to show how these terms are not simply interchangeable, and how the woman's body is depicted as having a special sympathy with the child which lends her a special, idealised status.

The linguistic records offered by scientific encyclopædias lend support for Thomas Laqueur's analysis of changes in the understanding of the sexes during the period.[38] Laqueur argues that until the eighteenth century, and a growing belief in the difference between the bodies of man and woman, women's bodies had been perceived as the same as men's, except for their inferiority in certain respects. Laqueur and I part company, however, over his explanation for the altered treatment of the woman's body on the dissecting table. He argues that a variety of eighteenth-century cultural

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[35] Herman Kogan, *The Story of the Encyclopædia Britannica*, (Chicago, 1958), p.11.

[36] Ephraim Chambers, *Cyclopoedia; Or, An Universal Dictionary of Arts and Sciences*, (London, 1727-1730); William Smellie, Ed. (lexicographer), *Encyclopædia Britannica*, (Edinburgh, 1768-1771). Kogan, op.cit., p.12, notes that, by contrast, 39 pages in *Encyclopædia Britannica* are devoted to discussion of the subject of farriery.

[37] John Harris, *Lexicon Technicum: or, an Universal English Dictionary of Arts and Sciences*, (London, 1704).

[38] Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex*, (London, 1990).

influences, which produced a certain idealisation of motherhood, were wholly responsible for the interpretations of medical men. Culture is more subtle than this, and biological findings cannot thus be wholly attributed to a construct in this way. Laqueur's thesis also ignores the differences in the intricate treatment of maternity in different literary forms. At times, they contrast with each other, and conflict in their representation of maternity. This must render any idea of a fixed cultural understanding of maternity impossible. This and subsequent Chapters propose to show how ambiguity about the subject of maternity pervades several forms of lay-medical discourse. It is medical writing which idealises motherhood, whilst lay-medical writing both assimilates, explores, and resists this idealisation.

In many varied ways, the woman and child bring to bear meaning upon each other in the medical texts, yet this cannot be explained through the obvious idea that maternal status is conferred on the producer of a living child. Pregnant mothers are described, according to the situation of the foetus, both as 'mothers' and as 'women' throughout numerous individual texts. One particular image however, that of the unborn child receiving sustenance and nurture from its mother's body, constantly draws attention to itself. It is this which affords a more exact understanding of the eighteenth-century biological interpretation of the female body, and the corresponding responses to its reproductive function, and we will return to it shortly. These medical texts envisage and celebrate the female reproductive capacity through their descriptions of the uterus. In them, the mother's body is both the site of generation, and of all which is 'natural' and good.

Several modern commentaries which deal with the eighteenth-century medical documentation of the female body claim that an antithesis emerges from such writing. This is that the mother is either identified with total virtue, or with total vice. Michel Foucault, for instance, insists that, "beginning in the eighteenth century" the female body was analysed by the male medical world and "qualified and disqualified as being thoroughly saturated with sexuality."[39] In Foucault's words, the notion that particular dangers surrounded women's bodies lay in their ability to "transmit diseases or create

[39] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 1976; Tr. Robert Hurley, (London, 1979), pp.103-104.

others that would afflict future generations."[40] Roy and Dorothy Porter also note that a mother's imagination or vices could "inflict" permanent damage upon the embryo.[41] Eighteenth-century texts, according to the Porters, acknowledge the pregnant womb as evidence of sexual maturity, and the corresponding danger a pregnant woman poses to her offspring. Depicting an uncertain moral territory in the shape of the feminine body, however, seems far more appropriate in a discussion of eighteenth-century narrative fiction, than in the medical discourse of the corresponding period, and this will be discussed more fully in the two concluding Chapters of this thesis.

Robert Whytt recognises the "antient opinion" which links "disorders" such as hysteria to a uterine source of infection, yet like Cheyne before him, he goes out of his way to deny any association with this belief. The symptoms of hysteria in married and unmarried women, Whytt asserts, arise from several sources. These can be as varied as the "violent affections of the mind, or a disordered state of the stomach, as well as from a fault in the uterus."[42] Even Cheyne's own guarded concession that "A rotten and corrupt Tree can produce nothing but bad Fruit" is emphatically qualified with information that hysteric fits are precipitated by an improper diet.[43] Cheyne cannot verify the idea of the womb as a specific locus for potentially infectious diseases. Nor is any hint of such disease found, more than two decades later, in the opening pages of Smellie's celebrated lengthy work entitled *A Treatise on the Theory and Practice of Midwifery* (1752-1754).[44] Furthermore, Robert Couper's evaluation of parts of the female reproductive system provides additional evidence to suggest precisely the opposite to Foucault's claim regarding the medicalisation, and corresponding sexualisation, of the entire female body. Couper's idealisation of the mother's body all but removes the womb from the sexual agenda and the source of foetal infection.[45] Rather ironically, its utility helps to distance the issue of sexual maturity and activity in

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[40] Ibid. p.118.
[41] Roy and Dorothy Porter, *In Sickness and in Health*, (London, 1988), p.77.
[42] Robert Whytt, *Observations on the Nature, Causes, and Cure of those Disorders ... called Nervous, Hypochondriac, or Hysteric*, (London, 1765), pp.104-106.
[43] Cheyne, op.cit., pp.6, 17.
[44] William Smellie, *A Treatise on the Theory and Practice of Midwifery*, (London, 1752-1754), pp.96-104.
[45] Couper, op.cit., pp.133, 174.

Couper's *Speculations on the Mode and Appearances of Impregnation in the Human Female* (1789). The language of morality which Couper employs as he hurriedly deals with unnamed reproductive parts which serve "merely as exciting or promoting libidinous purposes" distinctly changes in favour of proclamations respecting uterine utility:[46]

> ... we shall pass on with the physiologist to his examination of the uterus, which meets with more of his respect, as he considers every part of the female genital system chiefly as subservient to it.[47]

The potential presence of a child here apparently dissociates the woman from moral uncertainties surrounding her sexuality, and thus edifies her. Instead of identifying illness with the womb, these medical texts distinguish a positive visible form, the mother, in a way which provides peculiar contrasts with the imaginative depiction of the same female generative function in a selection of novels published between the 1720s and the last quarter of the century. Whilst reference to the female body abounds, the term used to depict each pregnant woman alternates between 'woman' and 'mother'. These terms are not used in an arbitrary way within the corpus studied nor, despite their reference to the same expectant or new mothers, are they synonymous. Instead they indicate how, when the child and mother are presented together, a special maternal status is conferred.

When the unborn child is clearly present in the view or description we are given of the woman's dissected body, the woman's status alters. The linguistic and pictorial framework which gives the term 'mother' meaning lends her an immediate affinity with certain ideas. She somehow embodies 'naturalness'. She is the source of human virtue. There is mutual harmony between mother and child: her body is the physical source of the child. The child, it seems, disperses the threat constituted by female sexuality which sustains other feminine stereotypes such as the whore, the embittered old spinster and, by inference, the virgin. The status of a mother in these texts is an estimable one.

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[46] Ibid. p.17.
[47] Ibid. p.17.

Paradoxically, at the same time, it derives both asexual *and* sexual connotations from the explicit way in which the child's presence meshes with it. Further investigation of the child's sexuality would lead to a digression from the medical texts which are the subject of this part of the Chapter: children and sexuality will, however, receive attention later in this study.

The medical discourse of the eighteenth century produces a sense of the rich intrinsic value of motherhood through the ways in which the terms 'woman' and 'mother' are employed in analyses of the state of pregnancy 'made visible'. The female role in the generation of new life is perceived to be a valuable, mysterious, and yet benign one. Distinctions which evolve between a state of sexual maturity and womanhood, and meaning which becomes associated with maternity, can be illustrated through a demonstration of the contexts in which these terms are used by a selection of medical commentators who employ both.

The pregnant woman is primarily an object of medical investigation in isolation from explicit mention of her child in one of the most important and influential medical works of the period, William Hunter's *Anatomical Description of the Human Gravid Uterus.*[48] Although the entire work is devoted to anatomical inspection of numerous corpses, all of which were those of women in some stage of pregnancy, empirical observation accompanies Hunter's reference to each "woman" as the condition of pregnancy is detailed. On page nine, for example, Hunter comments that "in a woman who has had many children there is a more loose and pendulous abdomen." Again, on page seventy-three, the author quantifies physiological changes in pregnant women. He mentions some jelly in the *os uteri,* and remarks that "some women have much more of it than others." The unknown function of muscular tissue is also systematically examined; readers learn that "the motion which is actually observed in the uterus of living women is involuntary and slow." Hunter's discussion acknowledges individual

48 William Hunter, tr. *Anatomia Uteri Humani Gravidi*, Birmingham, 1774; 2nd ed., (London, 1794). Jane Oppenheimer, *Essays in the History of Embryology and Biology*, (Cambridge, Mass., 1967), p.308, states that although Hunter's first publication date was 1774, his interest, and research for this work spanned over 30 years, beginning as early as the Spring of 1748, the year in which the first parts of Richardson's *Clarissa* went to press. He was responsible for numerous entries in the publication *Medical Observations*, (London, 1750-1770), produced by a group of London physicians.

differences in women's physical constitutions, yet maintains an empirical and dispassionate stance towards the bodies under investigation. Similarly uncoloured is Bland's account of some problems which may be encountered during delivery. His discussion of the measurements of the woman's body, which is abstracted from the context of pregnancy and foetus, is accompanied by a correspondingly matter-of-fact tone. It is markedly different from his depictions of mother and child, as will be seen later:

> Labour is therefore rendered tedious, difficult, and dangerous, in consequence of the structure and form of the pelvis, only when that part is distorted, or too small, compared to the bulk of the head of the child. The first case, which is always occasioned by disease, does not occur oftener than once in two or three hundred labours. The latter may be occasioned, by a variety of causes, as by the peculiarly small and delicate make of the woman.[49]

John Burns' attempt to establish the exact nature and constitution of the womb also employs the term 'woman' in keeping with its use by other anatomists.[50] Burns talks about his "calculations" of "exact" uterine dimensions, but admits to making "modifications" because of the differences in "the size of the woman, on the number of pregnancies, on the number and size of the foetuses" and so on. His mention of the foetus in the context of the womb does not explicitly entail maternal status here, and later in this Chapter we shall see how the conference between singular child and woman produces a 'picture' which colours the reader's response to the status of the woman under investigation. In Burns' text, however, size, shape, changes in structure, and the position of the female body continue to be precisely located alongside reference to the woman. Even the onset of a birth, which is described without any mention of the child, can be established. Despite whatever the "woman may feel", predictions concerning the nature and advancement of the birth can only be made by observing the positioning of

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[49] Bland, op.cit. p. 10. pp. 6, 33.

[50] John Burns, *The Anatomy of the Gravid Uterus*, (London, 1799). This publication was produced after twenty years' teaching experience, and a professorship at Glasgow.

the *os uteri.* William Smellie's mid-eighteenth-century treatise on midwifery articulates the mechanics of the birth in isolation from any mention of the child, or anything which the woman may contribute by way of experience. Smellie uses precisely the same mechanistic and dispassionate criteria. He states that "If the Os uteri remains close shut, it may be taken for granted, that the woman is not yet in labour."[51] Similarly, the text which accompanies his *Anatomical Tables* (1754) refers, almost without exception, to the illustrations of bodies as 'the woman' or 'the patient'. Variations in this trend in these textual explanations of his illustrations will be discussed later.[52]

Reports of the cæsarean operation which concentrate upon a woman's pelvic dimensions and the nature of the gravid uterus itself, similarly stress the term 'woman'. The first nine references to the singular woman in Baudelocque's work all involve description of the positioning of the womb, or the conformation of the pelvic bones.[53] Dr.Camper's example of an operation performed in 1778 typifies the way in which the female body is presented in earlier texts. Camper relates the details of what he found when dissecting a patient whose dramatic emergency cæsarean operation failed to save her life. Exposing the suspected cause of the situation was the surgery upon the corpse:

> We recollect also, that the celebrated Camper informed the secretary of the Academy of Surgery in 1778, that the cesarean had been performed upon a woman whose pelvis, on opening her body, measured only a Holland inch (about eleven French lines) in diameter.[54]

Baudelocque's catalogue of surgery performed during the second half of the eighteenth century in France and England is concentrated in the first part of his *Memoirs* (1798) and includes thirty-five descriptions of women who have undergone cæsarean operations.[55] Each operation is recalled in great detail: the lengths to which the author

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[51] Smellie, *Midwifery,* I, 189.
[52] Idem. *A Sett of Anatomical Tables, with Explanations,* (London, 1754).
[53] Baudelocque, op.cit., pp.20, 37.
[54] Ibid. pp.67-107. I have found no record, either modern or eighteenth-century, which explains the Holland inch unit of measurement. Samuel Johnson's *Dictionary of the English Language,* (London, 1755), does, however, explain the French line. This measures one-tenth of an inch, therefore a Holland inch should measure one inch and one-tenth.
[55] By this I mean specific reference to one woman, as opposed to those which refer to more than one woman in the text.

has gone in order to catalogue the extent of his successes and failures is perhaps unsurprising because he was trying to persuade sceptical English physicians of the potential for success which the cæsarean offered to mother and child in hopelessly difficult cases of childbirth.[56]

The subject of the operations described by Baudelocque is simply referred to as a "woman." Even in the cases of two women on pages sixty-eight and seventy, which specify that both already have children, the same reference to a 'woman' applies. This author alludes to a further seven patients as "woman", in accordance with his mention of the fate of their newborn children, but in each of these cases they have been separated by the mother's death.[57] All seven children have survived, yet the mother's status, in isolation from her living child, is hurriedly passed over; she is simply referred to as a "woman." The adherence to this term, and its use in depicting pregnant women, as well as those who are already mothers of living children, is in accordance with abundant references to pregnancy in these medical texts. It is only when the child is presented in distinct contact with the mother's body, or when they are described as being mutually subject to some immediate circumstance, that the pregnant woman is called a 'mother'. There is value in the mutuality of their experience, and in their physical closeness. This is symbolised by this precise alteration in the woman's status. Intimate physical involvement with her child confers maternal status, and the sense of meaning which accompanies it suggests her asexuality and virtue.

Much of Baudelocque's research takes the form of listing the successes and failures of the cæsarean operation. Here, the term 'woman', regardless of the subject's current maternal status, is for the most part impartially presented by way of strategic investigative evidence and calculations. However, the author employs the term 'mother' in the first part of his account in a very different way, one which highlights differences in depictions of female physical presence. Baudelocque's discourse provides a number of examples which indicate, without a single exception, how representations of maternity are located in the text metaphorically, pictorially, ideologically, and

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[56] Baudelocque, op.cit., pp.12-13, provides reasons for wanting his work translated into English.
[57] Ibid. pp.77, 78, 79, 81, 81, 86, 87.

semantically, in close association with the child. Nineteen references to a "mother" here are comprehensively accompanied by specific mention, usually in the same sentence, of either her "child" or her "infant."[58] Such collocation of mother and child serves as a means of persuasion. Baudelocque places emphasis upon the "happiness of being a mother", and this reflects the extraordinary value of the maternal status which is the reward for a successful operation.[59] The term 'mother' is concentrated in the first forty pages and in the final twenty-six pages, and its use corresponds with Baudelocque's strongest argument in favour of the cæsarean operation.[60] It is the means by which the potentially positive benefits of the operation are emphasized and set against the gory alternatives.[61] Significantly here, although the precipitating factors which urge its use centre around "the preservation of the child", Baudelocque articulates achievement in terms of producing a mother too: motherhood means success.[62]

I want to return, briefly, to Hunter's *An Anatomical Description of the Human Gravid Uterus*, because it, too, demonstrates an ideological variation in the notions represented by terms used to describe a woman's body under medical investigation. In contrast with the dispassionate and empirical emphasis in his dealing with the 'woman', Hunter uses the term 'mother' in the first instance while a 'picture' of the unborn child and its physical relation to its mother is being built up:

> With regard to the mother, the most common situation of the child by far is with its head downwards, and its nates at the upper part of the uterus.[63]

A striking alteration in style accompanies this 'illustration': the relationship between mother and child, apparently symbolised by the placenta and umbilical vessels, evokes an excited and unusually animated response from the author:

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[58] Ibid. pp.13, 14, 17, 25, 29, 30, 32, 40, 42, 42, 47, 75, 78, 80, 82, 84, 90, 96, 106.
[59] Ibid. p.25.
[60] Ibid. pp.80-106, during which 'mother' is employed a total of six times, and pp.1-40, during which 'mother' is employed a total of eight times.
[61] Ibid. pp.40, 42.
[62] Burns, op.cit, p.125.
[63] Hunter, op.cit, p.64.

> The secundaries [sic] form the chain of connection between the bodies of the mother and child, and carry on that wonderful influence upon which the life and health of the child depend.[64]

Such lively commentary is rarely equalled elsewhere in Hunter's treatise, and it is similarly stressed in his lectures given at the anatomy theatre at Windmill Street, London.[65] It is this "connection" between mother and child which alters the context within which the mother's reproductive function is regarded. This visible, inextricable biological involvement with her child in such instances alters her status. It is as if the obvious presence of her child sanctions the use of the term 'mother', which serves to edify her. Hunter's shifting use of the language descriptive of the female body does not exist in isolation. Smellie's semantic and linguistic changes are very similar. I have already outlined how the term 'woman' arises in Smellie's depiction of events in isolation from the child between pages 186 and 193 of his midwifery treatise.[66] By page 196, however, as the unborn child is introduced, and even though the author continues to debate the logistics of birth in the same empirically-focussed manner, its presence accompanies and seemingly precipitates Smellie's second reference to a 'mother'. Describing an illustration of an especially difficult foetal position in Table 27 of the *Anatomical Tables*, Smellie employs the term mother as he stresses the danger posed to both:

> This figure [of a distorted pelvis] may serve as an example of the extreme degree of distortion of the *Pelvis* between which and the well formed one, are many intermediate degrees, according to which the Difficulty of Delivery must increase, or diminish, as well as from the Disproportion of the *Pelvis* and Head of the *Foetus*; all which cases require the greatest Caution, both as to the management, and safety of the Mother and Child.[67]

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[64] Ibid. p.31. The secundaries include placenta, chorion and amnion.
[65] Hunter, *Two Introductory Lectures*, (London, 1784), p.61.
[66] Smellie, *Midwifery*.
[67] Smellie, *Tables*, No. 27.

Similarly in Robert Bland's *Observations on Human and on Comparative Parturition* (1794), the contextual presence of a child alters the way in which the woman's body is discussed.[68] The risks of death or injury to both draws the two metaphorically closer together in this text. "When the child presents by its feet", for example, the result could be the death of "the mother or the foetus, or both." As the context explicitly commits both bodies to the same dangers associated with forceps, excess manoeuvring, cæsarean birth, or premature labour, Bland's use of the term 'woman' consistently shifts to that of 'mother'.[69] Substantial differences in the location of the terms 'woman' and 'mother' , and other corresponding semantic changes, reinforce this positive sense of the exclusivity and merit of motherhood across these medical writings.[70]

Throughout a substantial period of the eighteenth century, physical connections between the woman and the unborn child serve as a focus of considerable attention. Literal connections between the two bodies, and the way in which the mother's body provides sustenance for the child, are pictorially and metaphorically represented within the medical writings. Cumulatively, this treatment provides an image of the unique original communion which 'exists' between them.

Uniformity characterises alternating references to the female body within individual texts. 'Woman' shifts to 'mother' at times when the unborn child is observed and discussed concurrently with her in the accounts of dissected uteri, and those which record childbirth. Burns' description of the child in the uterus provides the reader with a picture of their 'natural' bodily closeness:

> In the natural position, the child lies always with its head across the pelvis and the nates turned towards the fundus uteri. One of the sides lies toward the spine, and the other toward the navel of the mother.[71]

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[68] Bland, op.cit, p.76.

[69] Smellie, *Midwifery*, p.90, (forceps), p.83, (excess manoeuvering), p.197, (cæsarean birth), p.197, (premature labour).

[70] Further examples include Pugh, op.cit., pp.2, 15, 39, 65; Cheselden, op.cit., p.170; Alexander Stuart, *New Discoveries and Improvements In ... Anatomy and Surgery*, (London, 1738), pp.48-49.

[71] Burns, op.cit., p.125.

This illustration recurs in a number of the medical texts and embraces wider and more abstract ideas which are repeatedly located as part of a framework of meaning for the term 'mother'.[72] Yet another symbolic depiction of the complete cycle of communication between the bodies of a pregnant woman and her child is found in John Arbuthnot's essay of 1733, which is concerned with the nature of respiration. Their original intimacy is exemplified by the depiction of their mutual use of the "Mother's Blood" as a source of air.[73] Even as late as 1789, the way in which the maternal body nourishes the unborn child provides a point of focus, drawing attention to the especially intimate relationship between mother and child. This is visually represented, both by pictures of the child in the womb, and by the symbolic meanings associated with the umbilical vessels in medical speculation.

The link which these vessels provide is a means of "direct communication" between the two.[74] Robert Couper's use of the term 'mother' corresponds with this insistence upon the visible origin of the child's body in part of that of the mother:

> ... the foetus .... is capable of consuming all the blood which the Mother can furnish .... and hence arises that plethora, both in mother and child, which is to instigate the effort to parturition.[75]

In spite of Burns' acknowledgement that some doctors believed the umbilical vessels did not provide uninterrupted liaison between the two, the complete communication symbolised by this connection in other areas of medical writing was reiterated through this equation between mother and child.[76] Burns describes what happens if this connection becomes damaged in some way. He states that "whenever the mother loses blood, the child must lose blood": the rhetoric of internal balance in this claim serves to draw the two still closer together.[77] Another reference to the umbilical vessels details

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[72] Smellie, *Midwifery*, p.176.
[73] John Arbuthnot, *An Essay Concerning the Effects of Air on Human Bodies*, (London, 1733), p.99.
[74] Burns, op.cit., p.163.
[75] Couper, op.cit., p.96.
[76] Burns, op.cit., p.165. Doubts about the completeness of the link between mother and child which was presumed to be provided by the umbilical vessels were later proven to be correct. More recently, it has been established that the mother's blood, and that of her child do not, infact, mix at all during pregnancy.
[77] Ibid. p.165.

how the cutting of this vessel will not damage "Mother or Child": in keeping with the trend towards referring to a 'mother' only when the child is also being described, this is immediately followed by a uniform return to the use of woman "After the Child is born."[78]

The meanings which the symbolic representation of their mutual confluence lend to an emerging notion of 'mother' are developed in an associative way by Couper's suggestion of the mother's unexplained influence over the formation of her child. This rather abstract notion is related through a concrete representation by means of the image of an umbilical connection. Although, Couper argues, prevalent medical opinion denies a path of "communication by means of the nerves, between mother and child", there are "circumstances" attending the unborn child which cannot be accounted for independently of this "communication."[79]

Significantly, separation of mother and child, which occurs through an instance of umbilical damage, is accompanied by the use of alternative terminology. Baudelocque's account of how Lechaptois, attending an emergency cæsarean in a field, "began by dividing the funis umbilicalis to separate the child from the mother", catalogues the events subsequently affecting the mother after the birth: although she has this, and other children, she is simply described as "the woman".[80] This pattern is repeated in Burns' treatise when he explains what happens during a miscarriage As this critical communication is 'broken', maternal status is customarily removed. It could be argued that the change in the choice of language used to denote the status of the woman is a logical one because she is presumably no longer a mother if the foetus is dead, or aborts. This does not, however, explain why, in this case, the change in terminology occurs at a time when the woman is still pregnant. The tone of the descriptions of her alter. Before a miscarriage occurs, we are told simply that, "the woman generally complains first of coldness and shivering."[81]

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[78] Pugh, op.cit., pp.21-25.
[79] Couper, op.cit., p.136.
[80] Baudelocque, op.cit., p.96.
[81] Burns, op.cit., p.228.

It would be useful at this point to recapitulate the features which are common to the treatment of the mother's body in the medical texts so far considered. The representation of maternity in these texts is intimately associated with images of the close physical communication between mother and unborn child. Images of this confluence which arise in the medical texts are augmented by the symbolic use of the umbilical vessels, and the exploratory abstract sense of common generative origins which correspond with these 'pictures'. There is an intricate mesh between the complete 'picture' of the gravid uterus, and the symbols and metaphors which sustain it. These provide a sense of a positive yet rather mysterious confluence between mother and child. The mother's body is lent an unequivocal stature because it is the biological base from which the child derives life.

It is crucial to stress here that evidence strongly suggests that these medical texts were produced for a professional field of male practitioners, and that they were also accessible to male virtuosi and library members. Of course it is very difficult to prove the sex of the actual reader of any book, especially if it is in private hands. For the purposes of this Chapter, however, lists of subscribers, prices, and library membership details offer as reliable an indication of the readership of these books as research will allow. Later in the Chapter, my exploration of authorial comments in midwifery texts will serve to show how the intended readers of medically-detailed texts concerned with female anatomy were male. At this point, however, a brief consideration of some of the other evidence which points towards male readership of medical texts will help begin to sharpen the distinctions I want to make between the contents and readership of scientifically-detailed medical findings, and lay-medical discourse about maternity.

Before the middle of the century, books were very expensive.[82] Prices probably limited the purchase of certain medical texts to all but certain libraries and wealthy, successful, and enthusiastic professionals. One example helps to show the difference in the cost of some scientific works as compared to other lay-texts. Whilst one midwifery text, which lacks medical detail and which was explicitly aimed at female midwives,

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[82] G.S. Rousseau, 'Science Books and their readers in the eighteenth century', in Isabel Rivers, Ed. *Books and their Readers in Eighteenth-Century England*, (Leicester, 1982), p.233.

cost two shillings in 1736, a copy of the first edition of Hunter's life-size plates, which illustrate his dissections of the gravid uterus, cost six guineas.[83] Smellie's life-size anatomical plates (see fig. 2) were similarly explicit in their depiction of the dissected uterus, and probably fetched a similar price on account of their sheer size and quality.[84] Of course, these two examples are not representative of the cost of every medical text, and the inclusion of plates was an expensive luxury, quality printing requiring the expense of engraving and also larger paper.[85] Neither should it be taken for granted that the price of a book indicates the purchasing power of the reader because books were often given as gifts.[86] Taking these considerations into account, however, the evidence remains that even a new copy of Hunter's *Medical Commentaries* (1762-1764) would cost a client six shillings, three times as much as the midwifery manual for women. Even three shillings - half the asking price of Hunter's publication - was considered too high a price for Mrs Trimmer's religious text with popular appeal, *The Family Magazine* (1788). Alison Adburgham lays the blame for the quick demise of this magazine on its "expensive" price of three shillings per copy.[87]

Given the limitations upon the allowances of the group of book-reading women in question, and their relative exclusion from earnings-related professional activity, it is perhaps not surprising, then, to find that, out of 896 subscribers to the first English scientific encyclopædia - John Harris's *Lexicon Technicum; or, an Universal English Dictionary of Arts and Sciences* (1704) - only five of these were female.[88] Even of this small percentage of women, one - Mrs Hunt of Hereford - is listed as a bookseller, so it is unlikely that her purchase was a personal one. Advertised as "under 30 shillings to those who subscribe", it is probable that the cost of the two-volume work significantly

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[83] Douglas, op.cit. advertisement on verso of title page; Hunter, *Dr. Hunter's Plates of the Gravid Uterus*, (London, 1774).

[84] Smellie, *Tables*,

[85] John Thornton, *Thornton's Medical Books, Libraries and Collectors*, 1949; 3rd ed., (Hampshire, 1990), pp.117, 281. Thornton includes some prices of mid-century medical publications as follows: Cheselden's 3 vol. *Osteographia*, (London, 1733), cost four guineas by subscription. Even the cheaper books, produced a decade or more later, show variations in price which would have affected their sales. The renowned Dr.Mead produced a large paper, *On the Plague*, (London, 1744), which sold for 1s., whilst his work, *On Poisons*, (London, 1745), cost more than three times as much, at 3s.6d.

[86] *E.C.L.*, p.36.

[87] Alison Adburgham, *Women in Print*, (London, 1972), p.189.

[88] Harris, op.cit., 1, 2.

affected the level of subscriptions from the sector of women who bought and read books.[89] Any attempt to explain these subscription figures, however, must also take into account such factors as the overwhelming male domination of interest in scientific matters.

If a medical text was unaffordable to non-professional readers, libraries with medical holdings may not have provided an alternative source for acquiring this material. Before the establishment of the first circulating libraries in the Strand and Fleet Street during the 1730s and 1740s, readers' access to a wide choice of books would have been limited according to a combination of personal circumstances and publishers' output.[90] Paul Kaufman has cast doubt on the authenticity of the image of young women readers rushing to their library, where they could easily lay their hands upon copious quantities of corrupting material. Most members of the Bristol Library Society, Kaufman argues, were male.[91] This means that the twenty-four scientific and medical titles which were available to borrowers were chiefly being read by men.[92] In addition, G.S. Rousseau notes that it was not until the eighth decade of the eighteenth century that the number of residual scientific books held in libraries dramatically increased, and began to provide a true reflection of the latest scientific publications.[93] Thus for the period under consideration in this Chapter, women borrowers would not have had the breadth of choice in anatomical and medical texts available to them even if they were library members. John Thornton's findings complement this picture of library resources: book clubs which circulated medical texts exclusively for medical men developed from around 1770, in response to poor library provision, particularly in the provinces. The perceived need for these book clubs, together with the professional membership requirements for them, points towards the limited access to medical publications by women readers.

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[89] Idem. *Lexicon Technicum Magnum*, (London, 1702), p.2.
[90] Adburgham, *Shopping in Style*, (Hampshire, 1979), pp.52-53.
[91] Paul Kaufman, *Borrowings from the Bristol Library 1773-1784*, (Charlottesville, 1960), p.4. There were 137 members in the ninth year on record - 1782 - four of whom were women.
[92] Hunter, *Lectures*, Advertisment.
[93] Rousseau, op.cit., p.234.

The writing of one of the Fellows of the Royal Society shows how medical texts were used by medical practitioners in order to improve their knowledge of areas of medicine in which they were superficially trained or unfamiliar. Their utility to medical men is illuminated by a glimpse at how little was actually on the anatomy syllabus for students of William Cheselden in 1713. It is hardly enough to inspire confidence in the modern reader. In an advertisement for the comprehensive and thorough nature of his anatomy courses, the anatomy demonstrator boasts of how he will merely "point out the places where Chirurgical Operations are best perform'd."[94] Gynæcological information was to be "occasionally" mentioned.[95] Accordingly, Lorenz Heister augmented his own sparse training with reading, which included Mauriceau, Daventer, "and other good writers."[96] The catalogues showing the private library contents of other medical professionals indicate the enthusiasm of some in purchasing medical books for educational purposes.[97] Half of Hunter's collection of 10,000 volumes were medical books, Locke owned around 3,600 volumes, and Sir Hans Sloane's collection of 40,000 books formed the nucleus of the British Library's collection in 1754.[98]

Finally, the unique treatment, on occasions, of gynæcological information in *Philosophical Transactions* of the first quarter of the century seems to support the idea that medical information was written by and for medical men and male virtuosi. Almost all of the articles in this publication are in English, yet certain exceptions are written in Latin and remain untranslated. The Latin articles have a common subject: each deals with some aspect of the female body and its reproductive function. This implies that specific information about the female body was intended for the exclusive perusal of medical and educated men.[99] Thus, even though cheap penny editions of *Philosophical Transactions* were reproduced throughout the eighteenth century, this did not inevitably ensure the wider availability of all the scientific information within it.

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[94] Cheselden, tr. *Syllabus, Sive Index Humani Corporis partium Anatomicus*, 1711; 2nd ed., (London, 1713), Advertisement.
[95] Ibid. Advertisement.
[96] Lorenz Heister, *Medical, Chirurgical, and Anatomical Cases and Observations*, 1721; Tr. G.Wingman, (London, 1755), p.85.
[97] Thornton, op.cit., pp.267-281.
[98] Ibid. pp.281, 275, 276.
[99] *P.T.*, XIV, (1684), 630; XIX, (1695-1697), 486; XXII, (1700-1701), 787; XXXVI, (1729-1730), 257.

William Buchan has plenty to say about the differences between professional texts and their lay equivalents. As late in the century as 1796, he complains that, in matters relating to human reproduction, "The period is not yet arrived when medical publications may be addressed to the people with impunity."[100] What is implied here is that medical publications were not chiefly the province of the reading public, but that of a restricted audience, those within the profession.

As part of this consideration of the medical treatment of motherhood, I want to turn, at this point, to a selection of lay-medical, and other popular literature. Some of these have been chosen for inclusion in this study especially because they were aimed at female readers. Through an examination of how, if at all, these popular texts and magazines treated ideas concerning maternity, I hope to be able to determine how medical ideas may have influenced the ways in which practical texts treated maternity, and taught about motherhood.

iii. Ladies' Periodicals.

Ludmilla Jordanova, in her study of the effects upon family structure of the bio-medical sciences during the late eighteenth century, asserts that scientific and medical writings idealised and mystified the maternal body.[101] As we have already seen from the evidence of an earlier part of the century, this is vividly conveyed through pictorial representations of the gravid uterus. Semantic differences in these depictions also highlight disparity between the value of a woman's body as compared with a mother's body. Jordanova's study concludes that it was the popularisation of the idea of a unique bond between mother and child - an important feature of the medical writings - which helped to shape domestic arrangements by the end of the century. Other contemporary views about popular books and the "rapid dissemination of [scientific] knowledge", including those of Derek de Solla Price and G.S. Rousseau, accord with Jordanova. Each identifies a link between a public familiarity with persuasive medical arguments

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[100] William Buchan, *Observations Concerning the Prevention and Cure of the Venereal Disease*, (London, 1796), Preface, xxix.
[101] Jordanova, op.cit., p.109.

and claims made about the 'natural' state of humankind, and popular forms of literature, sales of which increased with the demands of an ever-larger reading public.[102]

A vast body of literature on pregnancy, childbirth, infanticide, breast-feeding, wet-nursing, swaddling and illegitimacy, Jordanova claims, allowed the direct diffusion of biological ideas concerned with maternity to the reading public.[103] As we shall see, however, the literature which serves to diffuse biological findings with regard to maternity during the period does not simply facilitate a direct migration of these representations, and the meanings which they confer upon the female body. Instead, the primary medical texts, and specific other texts containing the debate over the findings of experiments, dissections, and methodology, are reserved for an articulate male audience. Their competence in understanding some degree of the language of anatomy, as well as some depth of knowledge about bodily processes and systems, is assumed.

Secondly, during the first half of the century, much of the literature which is directed at women barely reflects the latest findings about female anatomy. Even discoveries which are not related to maternity are hurriedly dismissed, or receive no attention at all. In her indication that every publication concerned with domestic matters, fertility, and childcare is part of a universal collection on the subject of female generation, Jordanova makes few distinctions. Those which aim to 'show' the body and draw scientifically-authenticated conclusions directly from observable proof, are not differentiated in any way from the body of lay-medical and household literature which simply seeks to justify social roles, without explicit use of anatomical observation. In my consideration of the popularisation of medical ideas, I want to stress this distinction, because there is an important difference between being taught a fashionable and political prescription of mothercraft, and having the scientific basis for a maternal role - in this case the images of the pregnant uterus - clearly explicated before the reader's eyes.

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[102] Derek de Solla Price, 'The Book as a Scientific Instrument', *Science*, 158 (1967), 102-104; G.S.Rousseau, op.cit., p.213.
[103] Jordanova, op.cit., p.96.

That ladies' magazines grew in popularity during the period in question is suggested by the increasing numbers of titles which became available.[104] These magazines reflect what was considered to be suitable current debate for a female readership. They also provide apposite comparisons with equivalent periodicals for men, most notably Edward Cave's long-running *Gentleman's Magazine*, to which we will return shortly.[105]

There are two features common, in some degree, to each of these representative examples of ladies' periodicals, which are of interest for the purposes of this Chapter. The first is of particular importance, and conflicts with one of Adburgham's points concerning women's periodicals of the first half of the eighteenth century.[106] Adburgham's argument that, except in their lack of reports about parliamentary debates, some of these women's magazines exhibited "all the features of the *Gentleman's Magazine*", is not borne out when considering the treatment of female anatomy in each.[107] In women's periodicals, there is a lack of any information which meets the criteria both of being scientific and of relating to anatomical and biological debates and findings published in concurrent bio-medical writing. This is particularly surprising since magazines such as *The Ladies' Diary* (1704-1841) contain complex scientific debate of a mathematical nature. Any reader would have had to be fairly erudite in this subject - typically taught in the boys' public schools - to understand the *Diary's* articles and features. This periodical has recently been described as "an annual mathematical magazine for women.", and its title-page claim about its design to teach women skills in mathematics has been taken at face value, despite some critically rather neglected features of the magazine itself.[108] One of these is the way in which the magazine assumes that the reader has already attained a certain level of mathematical learning, and that no attempt is made to instruct in any way whatsoever. Participation in the examples and puzzles would only have been possible for those who knew a

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[104] Adburgham, *Print*, pp. 95-109.
[105] Edward Cave was the most prominent editor, entrepreneur, and force behind the *G.M.*, but others were involved in the editorial process with him.
[106] Adburgham, *Print*,
[107] Ibid. p.81.
[108] Rousseau, op.cit., p.213; Schiebinger, op.cit., pp.41-42.

considerable amount about approaching mathematical questions, and the readers' contributions to the magazine strongly suggest that a large proportion of these were men. The twenty-fifth edition of 1729, for instance, cites contributions made by Thomas Dod, James Kennerly Cherfidamus, Mr. T. Farnworth, John Shackleton, Mrs. Dunmow, Maria Lostall, John Eales, John Pierce, and others. Could these male names signify the adopted pen-identities of female readers? It does not seem as if the editor thought so, as the change in the magazine's name in 1749, to *The Gentlemen and Lady's Palladium*, acknowledges its mixed readership. In addition, in spite of this alteration in its perceived audience, the magazine's content and format remained unchanged.

The way in which *The Ladies' Diary* evolved admits the possibility that *The Ladies' Magazine* (1749-1753) and imitations like *The Ladies Chronologer* (1754) and, later, *The Lady's and Gentleman's Scientifical Repository* (1782-1784) enjoyed a considerable male following.[109] Similar formats of mathematical puzzles, the annual's diary, riddles and answers, and a few questions of natural history remain common to all four magazines. Significantly, the two latter publications were dedicated to an all-male institution, The Royal Society.

Natural history is an important feature of many magazines such as Eliza Haywood's *The Female Spectator* (1744-1746) whose debt to Addison and Steele is manifest in its index and list of contents. Goodwill's *The Ladies Magazine* (1749-1753) likewise devotes a great deal of attention to the appearance of insects under a microscope, and produces serialised accounts of investigations into the structure and function of these and a host of other animals, including reptiles, beavers and otters.[110] Given that periodical publications, by their very nature, are better able to respond quickly to the demands of their subscribers, it seems that life histories of various animals, as well as descriptions of scientific means by which information was gathered, were especially popular with female readers. Amongst Haywood's accounts of the life-

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[109] *The Ladies Diary; Or, the Womens Almanack*, (London, 1704-1749), J. Tipper, Ed. as *The Palladium*, (London, 1749-1750); *The Gentleman and Lady's Palladium*, (London, 1750-1757); *Gentleman and Lady's Diary and Palladium*, (London, 1758-1840); *The Lady's and Gentleman's Diary*, (London, 1841-1871). *The Ladies Chronologer*, (London, 1754); *The Lady's and Gentleman's Scientifical Repository*, (Newark and Sheffield, 1782-1784).

[110] *The Ladies Magazine: or, The Universal Entertainer*, Jasper Goodwill, (pseud?), Ed. (London, 1749-1753).

cycles of butterflies, kittens, and snails are scattered pieces of information about the human body. Humours, for example, dominate the first edition.[111] Despite evidence of interest in aspects of the somatic, Haywood explicitly refuses to be drawn into any discussion concerning the female body, even though publications such as *Medicina Curiosa* (1684) offer some limited evidence of early public interest in the human body itself.[112] Haywood dismisses an imagined request from her readers for information about their own bodies. She may be expressing her contempt for the female midwife, or perhaps passing comment about those who could not afford to employ a midwife or birth attendant of any sort, when she insists that such knowledge is only for the poor.[113] After a discussion about what happens to a particular toad's body when it becomes filled with venom, in place of further explanatory information about the condition of its body, Haywood appeals to a woman's respectable purity of mind. She quietly blends her digression from the subject of animal physiology with an argument for medical professional secrecy:

> But these are Reflections which the gay Part of my Sex, whether old or young, will tell me are not worth their Notice: If they find themselves any way disordered, they have their Physicians to apply to; and have no Occasion to trouble themselves with any thing relating to Medicine.
>
> This I readily grant to be true, as to the higher Class; but for the more inferior Part of Womankind, I think the World will allow that it would be no Diminution to them to know a little of these matters.[114]

The possession of such knowledge is seen to be felt unseemly, degrading, and inappropriate for the eyes of female readers and, as I hope to show, even dangerous.

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[111] The balanced combination of the four cardinal humours, blood, phlegm, choler and melancholy, were believed to determine the characteristics and health of the individual. This theory persisted through ancient and medieval times, and prevailed during the eighteenth century.

[112] *Medicina Curiosa*, (London, 1684). This was published three times a year, beginning 17 June 1684. Its production was very limited, being only two parts, which suggests that it did not sell well. This may have been because it was too specialised, or perhaps because the periodical form had not yet become established as one which sold in numbers witnessed in the following century with the publication of *The Spectator*, and subsequent periodicals.

[113] Haywood, op.cit., IV, 37.

[114] Ibid. IV, 37.

iv. The Evidence of *The Gentleman's Magazine.*

The evidence of the enormously successful *Gentleman's Magazine* (1731-1922) which was produced monthly, sustains the view that findings of medical research were chiefly of interest to, and made available for, male readers. As Porter points out in a lively discussion of eighteenth-century lay medical knowledge, *The Gentleman's Magazine* acted as an organ for diffusing comprehensive biological knowledge until the beginning of the nineteenth century.[115] It scrutinised the latest proceedings of medical societies, and invited debate upon them, regarding medical physick rather as the Universities did, as part of the rational Enlightenment. Many letters written to its fictional editor, 'Sylvanus Urban', precisely reflect the tone and format of research reports submitted to the Royal Society. One typical example is a detailed discussion, published during 1748, of a successful cæsarean operation performed in Finland.[116] As the writer of this letter notes, readers can continue to follow the progress of this particular operation in a forthcoming Royal Society publication. This demonstrates the way in which *The Gentleman's Magazine* stresses its debt to, and aims to emulate, the current topics of debate in the field of medical research. I cannot wholly agree with Porter's claim, however, that the airing of specifically female anatomical findings in *The Gentleman's Magazine* are very few and far between because the readership is male.[117] Interest is expressed, a significant number of times, in such phenomena as multiple births, cæsarean operations, unborn foetuses, the configuration of the female pelvic bones, childbirth, delivery attendants, and breastfeeding.[118] Significant also is the point that the majority of articles concerning these subjects saw publication during the four decades of the mid-eighteenth century.

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115 Roy Porter, 'Lay Medical Knowledge in the Eighteenth Century: The Evidence of the Gentleman's Magazine.' *Medical History*, XXIX (1985), 142-150.

116 *P.T.*, XVIII (1748), 112. See also *G.M.*, XVI (1746), 7, for device from *P.T.*, and I (1731), 422, for account of feeding and swaddling by a member of the Royal Society.

117 Porter, op.cit., p.149.

118 *G.M.*, VIII (1738), 275, 492, (multiple births); XVII (1747), 342, (unborn foetuses); ; XIX (1749), 211, (female pelvic configuration); XVI (1746), 7; XXII (1752), 507; LI (1781), 317; XLIV (1774), 462, (cæsareans).

There are a number of reasons why I want to look in some detail at the interest expressed by *The Gentleman's Magazine* about questions of female anatomy. Firstly, in keeping with my earlier discussion of primary medical manuals, the debate about generation and the woman's body is concentrated within a specific period of the forty years of the mid-eighteenth century. Broadly around the same period, I have noticed a decline in the amount and nature of health advice which was recommended by cookbooks, and a corresponding growth in supply of household health manuals which deal exclusively with matters pertaining to the body. These same years also witnessed the commencement of a fashion for ladies' periodicals. As Roy Porter indicates, the frequency and dependence upon many periodicals for contributions and letters from readers ensures an element of continuity and feedback.[119] Even annual publications, as many of these periodicals were, ensure an element of rapport between publication and audience, and thus offer some degree of insight into lay-medical interests.

In addition to these reasons, the space apportioned to the debate about female anatomy in *The Gentleman's Magazine* is denied in Porter's article about lay medical knowledge because, he argues, women do not read this magazine. In Porter's words, this is because it was written "quite explicitly" to cater "only to one sex."[120] This account has so far been based on the idea that access to certain medical images and information about female anatomy is considered appropriate to just such an exclusively male audience.[121] Although there is a small amount of evidence available which suggests that some women - Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, for example - did read this magazine, its title, the nature of its contents, and its list of subscribers all suggest that its audience was intended to be male. Despite this, or perhaps because of it, *The Gentleman's Magazine* offers many examples of its readers' interest in issues surrounding maternity. This means that it ought to provide apposite material for comparison with 'equivalent' popular periodicals and literature for women.[122]

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[119] Porter, op.cit., p.141.
[120] Ibid. p.165.
[121] There is some evidence to suggest that *G.M.* had some women readers, and I shall return to this in the conclusion.
[122] I use the term 'equivalent' with reservation. None of the ladies' periodical titles enjoyed anything comparable to the level of sales, nor the longevity, of *G.M.*

To my knowledge, there is no evidence to show that any single periodical publication which was intended for the instruction and amusement of mid-eighteenth-century ladies ever reached or sustained its popularity in a way which could compare with *The Gentleman's Magazine*.[123] In spite of this, this highly successful periodical for men shared a distinctly sensationalist approach with many ladies' magazines in its announcement of some of the mysteries concerned with human generation. The excited tone of one report, which announces that a seventy-two-year-old charwoman has been made a mother for the first time, and of another, which tells of surviving triplets born in Montgomery, echoes that found in the News sections of some ladies' magazines (XIX, 428). Jasper Goodwill's *Ladies' Magazine* provides a similar, if more morbid example: a gory description of the discovery, behind a hayrick, of the putrified body of a woman who had died alone in labour.[124] Magazines for men and for women were also jointly indebted to household cookbooks for the occasional recipe or remedy which they recommended, such as a 'proven' recipe which used laurel leaves for the procurement of an easy delivery.[125] *The Gentleman's Magazine*, however, differed considerably from the ladies' magazines in its invitations for readers' participation in lively debates about matters such as the cæsarean operation. As was mentioned earlier, an account of such an operation carried out in Finland is presented in the form of anatomists' notes in volume eighteen. Guidelines are included for the exact site of surgical opening which, we are told, must be "attempted along the *linea alba* under the navel" (XVIII, 112). After describing how the foetus is removed, the reader is supplied with information about the woman's subsequent recovery, including detail of how only a small *fistula* remains near the healed wound.[126] The complete account reflects, in tone and content, the work of Mauriceau and Baudeloque on the configuration of pelvic bones, and the necessity for the cæsarean operation.[127] As in the medical texts, physiological as opposed to orthodox religious explanations for labour pains are debated here in a

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[123] At the peak of its production, as Porter points out, (op.cit., p.39), *G.M.* sold 10,000 copies monthly, and was read by more readers than purchase numbers reflect.
[124] Goodwill, op.cit., I (1750), 25.
[125] Ibid. XXIII (1753), 461. See also *The Country Magazine*, (London, 1736-1737), especially the Nov. 1736 ed., and Goodwill, op.cit., II (1750), 140.
[126] A fistula is a long, pipe-like ulcer.
[127] Mauriceau, op.cit.; Baudeloque, op.cit.

sequence of three letters, all of which are published in volume twenty.[128] Foetal development and the nature of gestation are also examined. 'Timotheus's' letter, quoted in the first piece of correspondence in this sequence, advances the medical view, which is later also emphatically voiced by Dr Robert Bland, that pelvic distortion is not a punishment for Eve's sensuality.[129]

Similarly detailed histories are provided for the discussion of unusually old, underdeveloped foetuses, a subject which also receives a great deal of attention in *Philosophical Transactions*.[130] Descriptions of the surgical opening of the corpses of women who have produced live children whilst they have been carrying unvoided foetuses are as anatomically detailed in *The Gentleman's Magazine* as those depicted by Smellie and his successor at The College of Physicians, William Hunter.[131] In addition, to several comparable articles in *Philosophical Transactions*, Dr Middleton, writing for *The Gentleman's Magazine* nine years later, reports similar findings by means of the systematic reporting which is familiar in medical treatises.[132] The initial observations made on opening the woman's body are identical: both foetuses lie to the right side, and the position of each with regard to the ileum is indicated. The earlier Royal Society article shows in detail how the foetus is attached to the woman's intestines. Dr Middleton's account also recreates the scene, sparing none of the gruesome details of wastage, distortion and putrefaction. Middleton's foetal specimen, we are told, is similarly attached to the *ileum*, "in which the fimbria and part of the fallopian tube seemed to lose itself."[133] No explanatory notes or additional clarification about the anatomy described accompany such accounts in this magazine: thus the use of relatively sophisticated language probably offers evidence for the reader's presupposed familiarity with anatomical terminology. Moreover, such an account is not merely a mirror of the findings in the medical writing. The belief which is reinforced in household cookbooks - about the unborn child's position in the womb - is not

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128 *G.M.*, XX (1750), 109, 312, 413.
129 Bland, op.cit., p.19.
130 *P.T.*, XIX (1695-1697), 80, 291, 486; XXIV (1704-1705), 2176; XXXII (1720-1723), 387; XLIII (1744-1745), 304; XLIV (1746-1747), 617; XLV (1748), 121; XLVII (1751-1752), 146.
131 Smellie, op.cit., pp. 1-8; Hunter, op.cit., pp. 37, 66.
132 *G.M.*, XIX (1749), 211; *P.T.*, XLV (1748-1749), 121.
133 The fimbria is the fringed end of a fallopian tube.

substantiated by the laying-open of the gravid uterus in this way. Middleton draws attention to this in the conclusion to his findings, and in doing so adds to the active debate which operates both within this magazine and between it and the body of medical literature which seeks to observe and explain findings about human generation.

Readers of *The Gentleman's Magazine* were actively drawn into experimentation and investigation into the nature of the foetus and its origins. Scandalous reports in the same magazine of possible cases of infanticide also provided a point of scientific discussion about whether or not a means for testing whether a child was stillborn could be formulated in the light of recent biological discoveries. In reponse to a case in which a desperate mother was being accused of suffocating her illegitimate baby after its birth, a number of interested readers and contributors attempted to arrive at a solution for testing the child's body in order to establish the guilt or innocence of the mother in such cases. Dr Gibson set out the information known for certain about foetal blood supplies and the state of the lungs at birth.[134] An experiment to test the lungs of a dead newborn is described in the pages of the magazine in a highly detailed way, beginning with the opening of the thorax. Real scientific debate ensues as it is shown that the stillborn body did not sink as expected, even though, it was presumed, its lungs contained no air at all. Gibson does not offer much by way of an explanation, but invited his readers to try to prove that his findings were correct. He probably intended for some of them to try the experiment at home on available animals.

Finally, information and discussion surrounding the emotive issue of breastfeeding is biologically justified in *The Gentleman's Magazine* in a way which differs significantly from its treatment in concurrent manuals of household health. The criticism within the magazine of the popular practice of spoon-feeding infants conveys little which writers of household health manuals (to be discussed later in this Chapter) do not concerning socio-economic reasons for the improved feeding of infants, except perhaps that the magazine places sharper emphasis upon healthy people as valuable units of labour. Neither is the magazine at odds with these manuals regarding its

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[134] *P.T.*, XLIV (1774), 462; Arbuthnot, op.cit., pp.99-100, provides details about foetal blood circulation and use of the lungs.

insistence upon all mothers feeding their own children, although again the magazine is notably stricter in its prescription of the maternal feeding role. Whilst Cadogan allows that there are "very few exceptions" to the rule, Buchan is rather less dogmatic, conceding that some cannot suckle their children for various reasons.[135] By contrast, however, the writer of an article on breastfeeding in *The Gentleman's Magazine* dismisses even the most valid excuses for women's failure to feed their children themselves. Even if the poor woman lacks nipples, he asserts vehemently, they must be 'grown' at will. Remarkably, he insists that they may "easily be gained by a little care and good management" (XXII, 509).

A significant difference between this magazine and health manuals is the inclusion of a certain amount of detail about physiological processes and anatomical structures which underlie the biological justification for breastfeeding. In the magazine we find information about how it is thought that only mother's milk is appropriate for her child because it has been produced in her stomach, and readily digested for consumption.[136] Clearly, the picture *The Gentleman's Magazine* presents of the unborn child, and of the direct role of the mother's body in its nourishment at this stage, adds weight to the forceful argument in favour of her body's nurturing function. The mother's physical provision for her unborn child is presented as the 'natural' model for their relationship after the infant is born. What is important here is that the argument in favour of breastfeeding is based upon, and brings to the reader's attention, the mother's body and its relation with her child, both in its unborn state, and after its birth. Even the 'natural' design of this practice is highlighted in persuasive empirical terms. The mother alone is, we learn, "mechanically fitted and suited for the purpose, and they [babies] cannot be fed in any other way" (XXII, 508).

The Gentleman's Magazine, together with many examples of eighteenth-century medical texts, provides a contrast to ladies' magazines and, as we shall see, to household cookbooks which, during the middle of the century, witnessed the

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135 *E.N.M.C.*, p.20; , *D.M.*, pp.2-3.

136 *G.M.*,. XXII (1752), 508. See LI (1781), 318, for William Coley's argument that the milk is for consumption by the mother's infant only, and about the illness which is caused if the milk is ingested by any person other than that infant.

displacement and disappearance of such traditionally female concerns as childbirth and infant care from their pages. At this time, a trend for popular health manuals grew, and it seems that these developed as repositories for advice about the care and management of the body, whilst many cookbooks specialised in the preparation of food, and domestic organisation.[137] A lay male audience had many means of access to, and could participate in, a field of medical inquiry which vigorously laid open and investigated the female body for proof of its function and role. In the next few pages, we will examine the displacement of medical advice for women, and its selective reworking in the hugely popular household health books: these offer biological justification for practices upon which, a contributor to *The Gentleman's Magazine* claims, the definition of womanhood is dependent.[138] The 'biological' argument which sustains the maternal role prescribed by what I have called household health manuals, and in cookbooks of the period, is not supported by potentially indelicate anatomical representations. Only male readers, it appears, are invited to witness the sources and proof of a 'natural' role in depictions and discussion of anatomical investigation.

v. "The Cookbook rendered women and the poor self-sufficient in medical care"?[139]

Books which advised women about methods of cookery and household management during the first six decades of the eighteenth century are an obvious choice for examination because of their strong medical links in areas of authorship, and the preoccupation of medical writers with diet itself, as well as the obvious progression of foodstuffs such as ginger, apples, onions and herbs, from their culinary to their

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[137] This specialisation does not mean that medical advice was published in isolation from other domestic advice thereafter. During the nineteenth century, editors of cookery material such as that of Isabella Beeton, Ed. *The Book of Household Management*, 1861; (London, 1968) continued to offer rudimentary medical self-help advice. This book has separate Chapters entitled "The Doctor", and "The Rearing and Management of Children, and Diseases of Infancy and Childhood", which details revival techniques for inanimate newborns. (This book was originally sold in separate parts for 3d. monthly, London, 1859, and published in a lengthy single volume in 1861).

[138] *G.M.*, XXII (1752), 509. A woman who refuses to feed her child "ought not to be called by the name of woman."

[139] Schiebinger, op.cit., p.112.

medicinal uses.[140] In addition, cookery writing was deemed a way of educating women in self-help medical skills, as Eliza Smith cites in the title page of *The Compleat Housewife* (1727).[141] There is also a link between medicine and cookery which is established in the Old Testament, argues the same author.[142] Certainly, it is one which is exemplified by Dr Louis Lemery's work, *A Treatise of Foods in General* (1704) and by the mockery of what is regarded by one anonymous author in 1709 as the Royal Society's over-zealous association of all kinds of food with disease and illness.[143] Advertisements carried by many cookbooks themselves, which claim that the contents include the very latest remedies, provide the further strong proof of the suitability of these cookbooks in a study of methods of popularising medical ideas.

According to several prefaces in seventeenth-century guides to competency in all fields of housewifery, the skills of physick and chirurgery were desirable in all ladies of the commercial and landowning classes.[144] They were expected to have some knowledge of them so as to avoid expensive apothecary's bills, and also so that they could carry out their charitable duties more fully. A lady's charitable duty is cited as the justification for her lay-medical education until the decline in household cookbook physick well into the following century. It is hard to imagine her performing some of the less glamorous tasks, such as manually positioning the unborn child and administering the ubiquitous 'clyster' with her pipe. Late seventeenth-century cookery texts offer a curious blend of superstitious lore and very direct advice about different features of female generation based upon the known findings of named physicians such as Dr Mynsicht, and Sir Kenelm Digby, one of the first fellows of the Royal Society.[145].

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[140] Ibid. p.112, points out that there were, during the eighteenth century, expert and everyday cookery writers. The professional advisors were chiefly male, whilst cookbooks written for a broader audience were distinctly different in format, intention and readership.

[141] Eliza Smith, *The Compleat Housewife*, 1727; 4th ed., (London, 1730). See Schiebinger, op.cit., p.112.

[142] Ibid. Title-page.

[143] Ibid. Preface; Louis Lemery, *A Treatise of Foods in General*, 1704; Tr. D. Hay, (London, 1706); *The Art of Cookery*, (London, 1709).

[144] See Hannah Woolley, *The Gentlewoman's Companion*, (1673), 2nd edn., (London, 1675), The Epistle Dedicatory; *The True Preserver and Restorer of Health*, (London, 1682), To The Reader; *Art of Cookery*, op.cit., pp.4, 7, for mockery of Royal Society with satirical 'reconstruction' of an experiment to see whether carp will aid toothache, and a satirical letter to Dr Lister about ancient use of the toothpick.

[145] Hartman , op.cit., pp.284, 297, 310. Hartman gives advice about lunar-determined medication for women, and names individual doctors. See also Woolley, op.cit., p.169, for named doctors.

Unlike versions of household texts with which housewives of the 1730s and 1740s would have been familiar, these earlier texts abound with physicians' theories and physiological explanations for phenomena such as the signs of pregnancy and symptoms of impending miscarriage. The emphasis is firmly upon the physical. A flat stomach, George Hartman's reader is assured in 1682, may denote pregnancy because the womb is closing up in order to "nourish and cherish the Seed."[146] The address to the reader, in the same text, explains why its bias is towards the depiction of bodily processes. The book is for female midwives, but it is also intended for self-help purposes, for literate women's own understanding of the female body.

The reader is, in some sense, initiated into the role of midwife by the tasks assigned to her in Hannah Woolley's *Gentlewoman's Companion* (1673) but more especially in Hartman's text. He recommends, for instance, that she may achieve *podalic version* with the help of a special onion and apple drink.[147] Although the female body, and the medical opinion of the day concerning the function of the womb, are discussed in tones which denote a mixture of objectivity and awe, this cannot be simply attributed to the rather romanticised view upon which Foucault bases his study of eighteenth century sexuality, which is that the seventeenth century was characterised by a total lack of "concealment" and inhibition about all matters physical.[148] Amid objective depictions of the female body are hidden claims about the means of aiding a woman's fertility. The implication of this secrecy is that the necessary directions would be too candid for public print:

> I could tell some great secret to Women; which for several Reasons I omit to publish here; but if any Lady desires it of me, I shall very freely communicate it to her.[149]

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146 Hartman, op.cit., p.297; Woolley, op.cit., pp.181-182. Woolley offers detailed description of changes in breast function, size and shape which warn the observer of impending miscarriage, and remedies which help to manage lactation.

147 Hartman, op.cit., p.314. Podalic version involves manually turning the unborn child which is in an unusual position, so that its feet present first.

148 Foucault, op.cit., p.3.

149 Hartman, op.cit., p.296.

The trend towards including what claimed to be the most recent medical advice in cookbooks continued well into the eighteenth century, with writers such as Lydia Fisher advertising the medical contents of her work as an attractive selling point. Fisher's manual *The Prudent Housewife* (1750) contains "a medical portion far above any other."[150] Evidence of the popularity of these manuals is offered by the number of years they were in print, and by the numerous editions produced. Sarah Harrison's *Housekeeper's Pocket-Book* (1733) which was constantly reproduced over a period of 44 years, may have been considered only of average success when compared with the works of the most celebrated cookery writer of the time, Hannah Glasse.[151] There is some truth in the claim made in the sub-title of one of her pair of bestsellers, *The Art of Cookery, Made Plain and Easy* (1747) that this work "far exceeds any Thing of the Kind ever yet Published."[152] The text itself is faithful to its stated intention to instruct not just the genteel, but any aspiring reader of "the lower Sort."[153] Instead of bristling with complicated and correct table plans for luxurious dinners which comparable cookbooks intended for the wives of successful merchants and ladies, Glasse's text includes directions for ordinary, employed kitchen cooks, and even for the Captains of ships. It is unlikely that rich - and expensive - foods such as fowl would have been on the menu of the "illiterate and ignorant Person" whom Glasse aims to teach.[154] This does not, however, serve as contradictory evidence to the author's claim: the intermittent inclusion of advice about tasks for the house and servant maids suggests that cookery skills were being advocated for those employed to undertake them, as well as for private dometic use.[155] Glasse, it seems, appealed to markets which had, in minor ways, already begun to be acknowledged by writers such as 'Arabella Atkyns'.[156]

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150 Lydia Fisher, *The Prudent Housewife*, (London, 1750), title-page.
151 Sarah Harrison, *The Housekeeper's Pocket-Book*, 1733; 3rd ed., (London, 1743).
152 Hannah Glasse, *The Art of Cookery*, 1747; 3rd ed., (London, 1748).
153 Ibid. Address to the reader.
154 Ibid. p.1.
155 Ibid. pp.329, 330.
156 Arabella Atkyns, (pseud.), *The Family Magazine*, (London, 1741). Virginia Maclean, *A Short-Title Catalogue of Household and Cookery Books*, (London, 1981), notes that Atkyns' preface states that this is not the true name of the author. It is unlikely, however, that the claim of authorship by Atkyns' physician brother is true. The preface includes a glossary of terms for the benefit of "common readers" who do not share the same frame of reference as those more familiar with the art of cookery.

Clearly, *The Art of Cookery* proved popular by the standards of any publisher. It was already in its third edition a year after its first publication.

There were, of course, many variations on the cookery-book theme. The stated aim of a few authors, who are typified by Robert Smith, is to provide a highly specialised instruction to "the Nobility and Gentry of Great Britain" about the latest banqueting fashions and how to prepare them.[157] The concern of this Chapter, however, are those cookbooks which list medical advice, either in their long-title or list of contents. Arabella Atkyns' two-part manual is of particular interest because, except in her description of the green-sickness, there is no indication at all of physical symptoms.[158] In contrast to those seventeenth-century texts already mentioned, which convey their advice to the lay-person chiefly in terms of denoting and explaining physical signs, the reader is told nothing about childbirth except, for example, that there is one recipe which will help to void a dead child.[159] Similarly, we are told of another which will serve to "bring away what shouldn't be left in the womb."[160] How the reader should ascertain whether or not this treatment might be needed, and what to expect and why, remains left to the imagination, and probably to a tradition of oral lore to which we no longer have access. Atkyns' treatment of miscarriage appears especially vague and insubstantial when compared with Hartman's descriptive passage dealing with its signs, symptoms and suitable management.[161] All the eighteenth-century reader learns is that "nervous" women are especially prone to it.[162] Neither does Atkyns' discussion of the maternal role reflect the treatment given to the mother in the medical works of Digby, Mauriceau, Mowbray or Hunter [163]

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157 Robert Smith, *Court Cookery*, 1723; 2nd ed., (London, 1725), 'Address.' Smith lists amongst his reasons for producing this cookbook, the dated nature of many already on the market, and inconsistencies in Mr Lamb's accounts of King William's culinary preferences. See also Patrick Lamb, *Royal Cookery*, (London, 1710), John Middleton, *Five Hundred New Receipts in Cookery*, (London, 1734), and Mary Eales, *The Compleat Confectioner*, (London, 1733), for examples of 'specialist' cookbooks which do not advertise any medical remedies.

158 Atkyns, op.cit., p.108.

159 Ibid. p.289.

160 Ibid. p.105. See, for example of apposite medical comparison, Robert Johnson, *Enchiridion Medicum*, 1684; New ed. (London, 1712), p.250.

161 *Preserver*, op.cit, p.302.

162 Atkyns, op.cit, p.105.

163 Kenelm Digby, *Choice and Experimented Receipts in Physick and Chirurgery*, (London, 1668); Mauriceau, *Diseases*, op.cit. ; John Mowbray, *The Female Physician*, (London, 1730); Hunter, op.cit.

As opposed to what we find in these medical texts, the term 'mother' is used as an indictment, her milk regarded as the potential source of 'diseases' like rickets and epilepsy.[164] Even the recommendation that mothers ought to feed their own infants shows Atkyns at odds with representations of 'natural' maternal nurture.[165] The mother is advised only to feed her child herself for the first day or so of its life. Information offered about fertility and the management of pregnancy is precisely that which medical men warn is no longer viable in the light of biological knowledge. Medicine and oil are recommended for the pregnant woman in order to help her prepare for the birth, a practice which is scorned as entirely without medical grounding by those physicians who advocate the cæsarean operation, and say similar things about its success[166] In keeping with this apparent disregard of, and dissociation from a field of bio-medical discoveries specifically relating to the female anatomy, the work of another of Atkyns' named experts, George Cheyne, entirely conflicts with another of her statements. Cheyne's theory about poor diet as the cause of bodily disorders, receives no mention in her discussion of the causes of hysteria. Instead, the traditional theory which is so familiar to the writers of these cookbooks, about the womb as the site and cause of hysteria, is put forward again.[167]

What is particularly interesting in relation to Atkyns' commentary upon the subject of women and generation is the way in which, in the same text, information and opinion is offered about a number of parallel areas of medical discovery and debate. These have little in common with the treatment of matters relating to the female anatomy. By contrast, they receive distinctly medicalised treatment. Arbuthnot, for instance, is amongst the list of eminent physicians whose work, it is acknowledged in Atkyns' Preface, has provided the source for accurate advice about health in the appropriate section of this manual. Published only eight years previously, Arbuthnot's conclusions concerning the body's need for air are incorporated in advice given about

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[164] Atkyns, op.cit., pp.42, 44.
[165] Ibid. p.43.
[166] Ibid. p.106; Baudelocque, op.cit.; Mauriceau, *Diseases*. Both of the latter strongly advocate the cæsarean operation.
[167] Atkyns, op.cit., p.147.

the crowded and unhealthy conditions of town living.[168] William Harvey's findings about the human system of circulation underlie Atkyns' description of the causes of conditions such as dropsy. An approved treatment of scurvy with ascorbics is also recommended, despite the failure of many other authors of cookbooks to acknowledge recent progress made in this direction by the experience of sailors, whose findings are enthusiastically reported in the *Philosophical Transactions.*[169] Also, although the practice of inoculation, which is advertised by Dr Jurin of the Royal Society in 1723, is dismissed in favour of a more traditional tar-water cure for smallpox, there is, nevertheless, a brief, dismissive description of how variolation can be carried out by mixing blood with infectious matter.[170] The antidote for a snakebite, which is transcribed directly from the pages of the *Philosophical Transactions*, is included here, since the discovery has been made public after years of professional secrecy.[171]

Anatomy and healthcare are compatible in the primary medical writing which has already been discussed. This manual, however, only offers the reader enough information on many health matters to allow informed self-treatment. Like its late seventeenth-century forerunners, the names of physicians of repute are used in order to 'medically authenticate' advice given about various conditions, courses of treatment and remedies. In spite of the intense scrutiny, by the eighteenth-century medical world, of female anatomy, and the many corresponding new discoveries about the maternal body in particular, it is not treated in a comparable manner.

Many of the cookbooks produced during the third and fourth decades of the eighteenth century advertise their joint purpose as instructors in food preparation and in all aspects of self-help healthcare. Whilst writers of these cookbooks vary in their reflection of medical advice regarding the treatment of, for example, smallpox and scurvy, certain common trends are established for the discussion of the female role in generation. There is a lack of comparable detail. Hints are often all that are offered

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[168] Ibid. pp.29, 44; Arbuthnot, op.cit., p. 17.
[169] Atkyns, op.cit., p.199; *P.T.*, II (1665-1667), 494. See, for example of other superstitious treatments for scurvy, Anne Battam, *The Lady's Assistant*, 1750; 2nd ed., (London, 1759), p.206.
[170] Battam, op.cit., p.202. Variolation is the process of infecting the patient with some matter from the smallpox pustules of another person whose disease has gone through the infectious stage. See, for a fuller description of this process and its origins, Derek Baxby, *Jenner's Smallpox Vaccine*, (London, 1981).
[171] Atkyns, op.cit., pp.244-247.

about the management and care of pregnant women. Instead of direct and clear discussion and instruction regarding aspects of fertility, pregnancy, and childbirth, these writers apply to the imagination and to an oral tradition. It is hard to comment with much certainty upon how far and in what ways the female oral tradition may have compensated for the printed word at this time. The evidence, however, of the male professionalisation of midwifery, coupled with a distinctly limited dissemination of new research into popular literature for women readers, point to the likelihood that little new biologically-based information was being passed on in this way.

The work of Eliza Smith, after Hannah Glasse easily the most popular writer of household cookbooks during the eighteenth century, provides an apposite illustration of this trend for the cookbooks to reflect advice which is sometimes completely the opposite of that suggested by the medical texts. Like Atkyns', Smith's cookbook, *The Compleat Housewife* (1727) provides comparable minute detail about how smallpox is to be treated, and includes many of the recipes which are very familiar in cookbooks. She recommends concoctions to be ingested in order to combat smallpox, as well as different ones for external application to various areas of the body at each daily stage of a disease of three weeks' duration.[172] Instructions for recipes for self-help in pregnancy, however, are presented in a cursory way, and practices which are decried by the medical world are also advocated by Smith.[173] Advice offered by *The Complete Family-Piece* (1736) is very similar, and its debt to Smith is obvious by its word-for-word transcription of numbers of her recipes. The reader is lent neither insight into the means for self-help in the care of the expectant mother, nor of the newborn. Cures which claim to prevent miscarriage and which hasten a delivery are included, yet there is no instruction about how to identify any of the conditions for which remedies are offered. No indication is given about physical signs which would alert the mother or attendant that the unborn child is dead, and no physiological explanation is offered to explain such phenomena. Ironically, the brevity with which these recipes are given

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[172] Ibid. p.256.
[173] Ibid. p.282.

suggests an assumed knowledge; this may also be of a nature which cannot be articulated in these texts.

A single recipe for helping with a delivery in *The Complete Family-Piece* suitably illustrates this pattern of brief treatment and apparent secrecy. Here, the reader is told of a preparation which will "bring away what is, or should not be left in the Womb of a Puerpera."[174] I have not found any other cookery text of the period which compares with the self-consciousness of this. Smith also shares with later writers, most notably Martha Bradley, suggestions for preparations which mysteriously 'strengthen' and 'loosen' the mother's body in preparation for a birth. By contrast with the preoccupation with physiological explanations which are emphasized in the works of Smellie, Burns, Hunter, Mauriceau, and Baudeloque, the precise effects and uses of these medicines remain shrouded in secrecy.[175]

Mary Kettilby's treatment of the same subject in her formidable *Collection of above Three Hundred Receipts in Cookery, Physick and Surgery* (1714) provides yet another example of the differences which are beginning to evolve in its treatment during a period of the eighteenth century in which there was much active inquiry into the function and role of the female body.[176] Towards the middle of the century, fewer and fewer cookbooks advertise medical information in their list of contents. Of those that do, self-help remedies suggested for the health of mother and infant consistently fail to reflect medical findings. Certain writers, Kettilby amongst them, include aspects of female generation in their list of what the manual will teach, but avoid actually presenting or discussing these issues anywhere in the text.[177] Sarah Harrison's *The House-Keeper's Pocket Book; And Compleat Family Cook* (1733) also promises both medical authenticity and the inclusion of most of the conditions to which the human body may be subject. Although her subject is wide-ranging, there is no mention of fertility, generation, pregnancy or childbirth here.[178] Harrison's avoidance of this subject hardly seems coincidental when it is considered alongside the gradual trend in

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[174] *The Complete Family-Piece*, 1736; 2nd ed., (London, 1737), p.71.
[175] Martha Bradley, *The British Housewife*, (London, 1760), p.281; E. .Smith, op.cit., p..230, 261, 282.
[176] Mary Kettilby, *A Collection of above Three Hundred Receipts*, 1714; 4th ed., (London, 1728).
[177] Ibid. Preface, v.
[178] Harrison, op.cit.

cookbooks for omitting, or for couching in lore and secrecy, the subject of women's bodies.

By the 1750s the texts of writers such as Glasse, Cleland, William Verral and John Thacker no longer include any mention of physick in their titles, and later still the titles, such as Mary Smith's *The Complete House-Keeper* (1772) and Elizabeth Raffald's *The Experienced House-Keeper* (1769) exemplify the specialisation of cookery writing in household organisation and recipes.[179] Although, later in the century, some cookbooks begin to reproduce medically-justified ideas from the health manuals of William Cadogan and William Buchan, it appears that, by the beginning of the 1760s, household cookbooks have consciously reduced their focus upon matters of health. They have largely stopped including traditional recipes for the care and management of pregnancy and childbirth, whilst a special body of household books are dedicated to this purpose alone.

Although some cookbooks include a small section on medical recipes, what is markedly absent from them is information or recipes which aim to instruct the reader about conditions which are exclusive to the female body. Sarah Jackson and Anne Battam may be seen as exceptions to this rule because each of their manuals on household management, produced during the 1750s, contains one brief recipe for the procurement of an easy labour. Even here, however, these recipes continue to reflect traditional remedies, such as goose-grease and figs, which are supposed to provide a magical aid to childbirth, and which are much criticised elsewhere for having no scientific basis. Glasse suggests reasons for the trend evident in the cookbooks of the mid-eighteenth century for leaving out all aspects of maternity from them. Her introduction to a minor Chapter on common cures similarly contains no information at all about maternity, and her explanation for the choice of contents shows she considers that certain medical matters ought to remain in the hands of the professional:

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[179] Elizabeth Cleland, *A New and Easy Method of Cookery*, 1755; 3rd ed., (Edinburgh, 1770); Hannah Glasse, *The Compleat Confectioner*, (London, 1760); John Thacker, *The Art of Cookery*, (Newcastle, 1758); William Verral, *A Complete System of Cookery*, (London, 1759); Elizabeth Raffald, *The Experienced English House-Keeper*, (Manchester, 1769); Mary Smith, *The Complete House-Keeper*, (Newcastle, 1772).

> I do not pretend to meddle here in the physical way; but a few Directions for the Cook, or Nurse, I presume, will not be improper .... as the Doctor ordered.[180]

Glasse's words reinforce what has been suggested by the gradual decline in popular self-help information in general within these cookbooks. It particularly reflects differences in the treatment of numerous common physical conditions, among them those exclusively related to generation. They also echo changes brought about by the interest of the medical world in particular areas of anatomical knowledge. Ironically, the accessibility of medical knowledge based upon early eighteenth-century medical findings, which characterises this wrangling between nurses, apothecaries, physicians, and midwives, trained and untrained, is allied with the popularisation of such knowledge among a wider reading public, and specifically, in the cases of ladies' magazines and household cookbooks, a female audience.

What is interesting about these trends is the effect which these means of popularising ideas surrounding mothering had upon the thinking about maternity of the layperson and woman reader. Household cookbooks, it seems, were sources of quite detailed information, some anatomical, about many aspects of maternity for the lay-woman during the seventeenth century. Their eighteenth-century equivalents mention very little about anatomy, and sometimes reveal their discomfort with anatomical detail through the efforts made to avoid such descriptions. In addition, although physicians' names are used in order to authenticate much advice, and although other medical findings are, to some degree, reflected in the remedies offered, advice about female generation does not reflect the latest bio-medical findings which are concurrently discussed by physicians and other interested parties. A comprehensive feast of superstitious lore and remedies forms the basis for the advice offered to housewives by cookery writers. It is not unusual to find certain recipes unchanged even in wording for several decades. One, which recommends that nurses improve their breastmilk by eating 'lentil pottage', provides an example of this stasis. Indeed, one of the few

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[180] Glasse, *Confectioner*, op.cit., p.274.

alterations made to the cookbook format during the period is the dwindling of its own peculiar brand of medical advice.

I have been suggesting that two forms of literature which sold well during the period, ladies' magazines and books about cookery domestic management, provide little proof that biological findings surrounding the female anatomy were being diffused through, demanded by, or debated by, a female audience prior to around 1760. The 'specialisation' of cookbooks into organs of kitchen management and sources of advice about polite entertaining in the home occurs during the fifth and sixth decades of the eighteenth century, years which also witnessed considerable growth in the number of women readers.[181] In addition, the medical advice which does find a place in cookery writing does not include faithful reproductions of medical findings about women's bodies in particular. In one sense, this is surprising when considered in the light of what was being produced in response to what Kaufman calls an ever-increasing public demand for knowledge both self-improving and scientific.[182] It could be assumed that a developing market for household health manuals - whose popularity was established by physician-writers such as William Cadogan and William Buchan - produced a popular form of literature whose focus upon health matters provided the opportunity for the dissemination of greater detail and accuracy of anatomical knowledge to the reader. The next part of the Chapter shows that this was not the case.

vi. Household Health Manuals.

My choice of what I will call household health manuals as a representative of popular eighteenth-century literature which was intended for women readers has been influenced, in the first instance, by the evidence of numerous re-printings, and by the sort of market speculation which their authors indulge in, often in the Preface to their work. In *The Complete Family-Piece* (1736) for instance, the optimism of the anonymous author concerning the expected circulation of what he or she sees as his

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[181] Rousseau, op.cit., p.213.
[182] Kaufman, *Libraries and Their Users*, (London, 1969), p.219.

indispensible and comprehensive household manual is clear. He or she hopes that, in a few years, there will "scarcely be a private family without it."[183] In addition, the frequent naming of doctors and medical men in order to authenticate much of the medical advice which they offer to housewives points towards their status as 'household names', as well as to the importance of the cookbook genre in diffusing the ideas of the medical world. At this point, I shall turn to two of the most widely-read and enduring of what I shall call household health manuals, in order to examine the sense in which this form of publication 'replaced' the cookbooks as sources of self-help in health care. Representations of maternity in these, combined with the treatment of the anatomical debate in other forms of writing intended for gender-specific audiences, produce a matrix of representations of maternity made up of elements as diverse as images of a dissected gravid uterus, and ambiguous allusions to 'unrepresentable' pictures of mother and unborn child. This re-evaluation of household health manuals will help to show how, especially for women, such diversity helped to shape the meaning of motherhood in subtle and complex ways.

Two texts which enjoyed immense popularity during the second half of the eighteenth century will be the subject of this study of household health manuals. Both were influenced and produced by members of the Edinburgh medical circle whose particular interests lay in investigating anatomy, and especially the female role in generating children. Both authors name The Foundling Hospital - which was opened during 1741 with the financial aid of interested benefactors including Samuel Richardson - as their initial source for certain observations made about childcare. One of these manuals, William Cadogan's *Essay on the Nursing and Management of Children from their Birth to Three Years of Age* (1748) appropriately became the Hospital's bible. Public attention was focussed both upon the Hospital itself and the practices of leading physicians like Sir Hans Sloane. A collection of eminent physicians who offered their services to the Hospital free of charge, and who were committed to the provision of quality childcare there, must have contributed greatly to the reputation

[183] Longman, op.cit., Preface, x.

of Cadogan's book.[184] It was an instant success. Smellie recommended it as suitable reading for nurses, and as late as twenty-three years after publication its reputation remained high: the reviewer of new publications for *The Gentleman's Magazine* of 1771 bemoans the production of yet another imitation of Cadogan's work, which he wearily describes as a "catch-penny engrafted upon the popularity of Dr Cadogan."[185]

Cadogan's health manual advises women in particular about their correct role with relation to children. The second manual I have chosen for the focus of this study, William Buchan's *Domestic Medicine* (1769) plainly states its intention to do the same, and in some sense both are little removed from the literature which outlines moral conduct, to which we will return in a later Chapter. Buchan's text, too, sold numerous copies and remained in print for almost a century and a half. Smellie became intensely involved in the writing of this text alongside Buchan, who was himself an ex-pupil of the late anatomist Robert Whytt.[186]

The inclusion of the word 'Domestic' in its title indicates that this book was intended for a very specific use as a source for and improver of household skills. In an edition of *The Spectator* of June 1711, a letter from 'Coquetilla' suggests books were intended for about aspects of household management a female readership. 'Coquetilla' involves herself in the debate concerning suitable reading matter for a lady, which galvanised Steele into producing *The Ladies' Library* (1714) three years later. It is obvious from her begged request that household texts were produced especially for women readers. In mischievous mood, Steele reports that:

> Coquetilla begs me not to think of nailing Women upon their Knees with Manuals of Devotion, nor of scorching their Faces with Books of Housewifry.[187]

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184 See, for evidence of eighteenth-century public interest in The Foundling Hospital, a report in *G.M.*., XIV (1744), p.226.
185 *G.M.*, XLI (1771), p.414.
186 C. Lawrence, 'William Buchan: Medicine Laid Open.', *Medical History* XIX (1975), p.20.
187 *The Spectator*, II (No. 92), (1711), 61.

It is not surprising, therefore, to find that Rousseau's documentation of the catalogues of private library collections made by certain medical men do not contain any examples of household health or cookery books.[188] Their absence is an important one: the implication is that such skills and household texts were treated in a different way from other books, in particular medical books, and found a different audience. Although a third and earlier manual of household skills, John Wesley's *Primitive Physick* (1747) will receive some attention in relation to this discussion of the works of Buchan and Cadogan, its ambiguous, superstitious and 'unmedical' advice lends it more of an affinity with cookbooks than with the later brand of household health manual.[189] Because Wesley's renowned work does not attempt to reflect the findings of the medical world in any discernible way, and because we are already familiar with the cookbook format and contents with which it is so closely allied, *Primitive Physick* will not be discussed at length in this Chapter.

Eighteenth-century household health manuals were significantly influenced by the development of formal scientific experimentation and publication. This is made obvious by the sectioned format, and by the establishment of patterns of self-help treatment, particularly by Buchan. There is a clear adherence to a systematic observation of symptoms, followed by an informed regimen of treatment, both administered and behavioural. In cookbook prescriptions of physick, by contrast, these are sometimes found either in reverse or random order, if there is any pattern at all. As well as owing a debt to the organisational patterns of medical texts, there are also significant changes in their content when compared with cookbooks. Much of the highly superstitious lore surrounding issues of fertility and child-bearing is discredited in the health manuals, because of its lack of essential medical grounding. Also, Buchan and Cadogan attach great importance to the generation and nurture of children, which is given elaborate medical attention through pictorial representations in medical literature. Semantic changes which reflect medically-idealised meanings of the term 'mother', and its dissociation from that of 'woman', are reproduced in descriptions in the health texts

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[188] Rousseau, op.cit., pp.234-238.

[189] John Wesley, *Primitive Physick*, (London, 1747).

of mothers in isolation from their children.[190] There are also instructive features such as how to manage miscarriages.[191] In keeping with these is the contemptuous regard of women who are considered either physically or morally unfit for motherhood.[192]

Buchan had a lifelong interest in popularisation, and his introduction to the first edition of *Domestic Medicine*, produced during 1769, claims that, at last, for the sake of the delight of the subject itself, and to counter public gullibility, a field of medical knowledge is 'laid open' to the literate classes. Lawrence's use of this idea of 'laying open' the human body to the public in the title of his enthusiastic biographical study of Buchan's work offers evidence of the tenor of Lawrence's comprehensive study, which is centred upon the view that Buchan achieved this aim. In ways in which both Cadogan and Buchan deal with female anatomy, however, the body is anything but 'laid open'. The medical practice of 'exposing' pictures of physiology is not included either by Cadogan or Buchan, although it may be elusively alluded to.[193] According to Cadogan, by mid-century, half of all deaths occurring in the under-five age-range are preventable. In the first few pages of his essay, Cadogan states his intention to explore the child's 'natural' state in order that he may formulate the means by which the infant survival rate could be improved. The 'natural' state to which he refers is that of pre-birth, yet there is no invitation to regard the mutual compatability of the mother and her unborn developing child here. Instead, this original 'stage' is covertly alluded to by means of a metaphor of natural history, a subject especially popular with female readers at this time:

> In all other productions of Nature, we see the greatest vigour and luxuriancy of health, the nearer they are to the egg or the bud (5).

This same original state is ambiguously intimated again on page fifteen: Cadogan's prescription for "the business of Nursing" aims to "exactly copy" it (15).

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[190] *E.N.M.C.*, p.1.
[191] *D.M.*, p.659.
[192] *D.M.*, pp.3, 5, 565.
[193] Biological conclusions concerned with 'natural' maternity rest heavily in medical treatises and in accounts which correspond with these in various volumes of *G.M.*, as was described earlier in this Chapter.

Cadogan directly contradicts some of the cookbook advice about mothers' milk being suffused with disease, dismissing this idea as a misrepresentative "vulgar error", and insisting that this milk has special purifying and medicinal properties (21). Milk is described in colourful, even lyrical terms as it symbolises the sanctity of maternity which the medical texts confer upon the mother who produces and nurtures a child. It "cleanses the Child", and establishes the mother's own health, a point which Buchan is also keen to make.[194] It is especially noteworthy that these household health texts derive their authority by distinguishing themselves from other lay-medical material, and by establishing a more obvious association with the primary medical texts: this is largely due to what the authors choose to include, and to leave out, in indicating their association with medical writing. Buchan, like Cadogan, deliberately places a figurative 'space' between his outline of a worthwhile maternal role, and the biological justification which provides the framework for such assertions in the medical debates which are intended for male readers. His manual aims to help the reader to help herself and her child: a great deal of importance is placed in the imitation of an intimate mother-child relationship, and Buchan goes so far as to recommend a prototype form of child-benefit scheme which, he argues, would allow poor families to maintain the mother-child liaison which medical discourse locates as the bedrock for a stable human society (29). Moreover, Buchan cites the nurture of the child, based upon this important biologically proven 'natural' state, as his motivating purpose in making health treatments available and widely accessible.

A progressive view that fathers ought to be, in some way, involved in the care of their own children is also introduced by Buchan, but the woman's capacity for its formation and her nurture of the foetus are, in just six ambiguous words, referred to as the reasons behind his argument for her 'natural' propensity in teaching and caring for her young child (6). A woman's domestic province is thus vindicated without anything more than a fleeting reference to an anatomical model for this. All we are told is that women "form the body" and, still more mysteriously, give the child its first "early bias" (5). This manner of circumventing the issue of gestation and the role of the woman's

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[194] *E.N.M.C.*, p.22; *D.M.*, p.19.

body continues when Buchan returns to the subject of how important a woman's health is, because of its bearing upon her pregnancy and the origin of the foetus from her own bodily substance. He attributes the main part of what little he has said about the origin of children to the observations of another writer, Jean-Jacques Rousseau (8). There may be several reasons for this trend.

Firstly, whilst Buchan repeatedly emphasizes his aversion to medical secrecy in *Domestic Medicine,* he also demonstrates strong feelings in favour of the exclusive professional midwifery service offered by a "particular set of men."[195] *Domestic Medicine* is a manual in which the management of labour by women in particular - as taught by a tradition of household cookbooks - is condemned. Particular criticism is directed at practices such as reviving the exhausted mother with spirits and cordials, and the use of oils in order to procure or ease labour (17, 661). Alongside this is contradictory evidence of his admiration for the skills and experience of untrained female operators (166). The balance, however, falls in favour of professionally-trained male midwives when Buchan explains his version of self-help to aid fertility, or in the event of pregnancy and childbirth. In contrast with advice given about other kinds of medical self-treatment, such as the home prevention and treatment of smallpox, details about the physiology of the pregnant condition are extremely sparse. Whilst, like the subject of midwifery techniques and their corresponding specialised knowledge, 'professional' secrecy with regard to the preventative means of variolation is acknowledged, nevertheless Buchan goes to great lengths to describe each reason for every physiological symptom and sign of smallpox to an audience for whom this disease was still a very familiar sight.[196] He shows each step in the procedure of variolation which was introduced in England during 1718 by Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, and enthusiastically advocated in her letters to friends and family.[197] Buchan's readers are left in no doubt about how to inoculate themselves and their

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[195] *D.M.*, preface, xxvii, 6, 12, 19, 286, 661.

[196] Thomas Thompson, *An Enquiry into the Origin, Nature and Cure of the Small-Pox*, (London, 1752), p.2. Thompson indicates that the disease is still prevalent at this time in his complaint about countless useless treatments for it. On 29 Jan. of the same year, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu wrote to her husband Wortley that smallpox was still "frequent with us."; see Halsband, op.cit., III (1752-1762),1.

[197] Halsband, op.cit., II (1721-1751),25, 26, 49; III (1752-1762), 1.

children (269-270). In the case of childbirth, however, the opposite is true. Buchan's account of how to manage this is little more than a list of medically unsound practices which should be avoided.

In tone, Buchan's manual is little removed from that of contemporaneous conduct literature for women. No mention is made of recent and much-acclaimed anatomical findings, nor of special physiological features such as small pelvic dimensions, which physicians knew to be associated with potentially difficult births, the knowledge of which allows Baudelocque to plan and discuss childbirth management for certain individuals sometimes months before the event. Although some difficult cases receive a little attention, the nature of their difficulties remains hidden behind Buchan's uncharacteristic verbal vagueness. Male midwives must intercede, he insists. What they might do, or why, remains a mystery. Not surprisingly, numerous stories of horror and intrigue in which male midwives play mysterious, even predatory roles, were rife at this time.[198]

Buchan's text offers its own further clues about why the female body is presented in only the most indirect of ways in the two household manuals in question. A body cannot be 'laid open' and exposed before a female audience because it is plainly indelicate. The explicit use, before women, of language which even hints at the female organs of generation is a social taboo. Although the traditional connection between the womb and hysteria, for instance, had been under attack, from physicians such as Cheyne, for more than a quarter of a century, and despite Buchan's own attempts to reinforce this shift in thinking by linking hysteria with the stomach and nervous system, long-established links with the womb renders hysteria an unsuitable and "affronting" subject for mention in a woman's presence (563). As a medium, therefore, which seeks to 'lay open' medical discoveries, and upon which households rely for the transmission of the latest medical findings, readers of health manuals can have gleaned very little

198 Barbara Brandon Schorrenberg, 'Is Childbirth Any Place for a Woman?', *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture* X (1981), p.401. One example is included in a serialised dissertation about The Royal Society in *The Ladies' Magazine*, op.cit., I (1750), p.172 (XIII)(1750), p.199 (XIV) (1750), p.215. The latter centres upon the scandalous seduction of a young woman by her male medical attendant.

new information about the nature of the female body, arising from anatomical investigation and debate.

vii. Midwifery Texts.

Repeated calls during the period for the proper training of women who worked as midwives suggest that these, of all interested parties, would have had the most practical and respectable 'professional' reasons for wanting to learn about female anatomy. Even these reasons are not considered strong enough: the implications are that the intrinsic interest of ordinary women is still less so. This part of the Chapter attempts to ascertain how much access the female midwife might have had to the latest medical findings which are concerned with the female anatomy and the subject of maternity.

Some modern historians have claimed that female midwives would have had the opportunity to read specialised midwifery texts whose contents were intended to teach the latest obstetric skills. Barbara Brandon Schorrenberg and Adrienne Rich each base their analyses of gender politics upon the assumption that several basic midwifery texts which were in circulation during the eighteenth century would have supplied a female midwife with as good a theoretical grasp of physiology as her male counterpart.[199] Both rather optimistically assume the literacy of these often ordinary women. It is notoriously difficult, of course, to say anything with certainty about the levels of literacy amongst this group: Samuel Johnson's much-quoted comment that "all our ladies now read", which was made in 1778, is surely referring to the wealthier classes.[200] The social status intimated by the word 'lady' should not be readily exchanged with that of 'woman' at this time. David Cressy's more recent study, of the levels of literacy apparent from the depositions of the City of Norwich and its rural surround, reveals a bleaker picture of levels of literacy amongst women in the early years of the eighteenth century.[201] Although Cressy's study ends with the 1720s, and

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[199] The studies referred to are those of Jordanova, Rousseau, and Price. Brandon Schorrenberg, op.cit., and Rich, op.cit., pp.128-155. See Elaine Hobby, *Virtue of Necessity*, (London, 1988), p.183, for argument that male operators had a superior knowledge of anatomy.

[200] James Boswell, *Boswell's Life of Johnson*, 1791; G.B. Hill, Ed. (Oxford, 1934), III, 333.

[201] David Cressy, *Levels of Illiteracy in England, 1530-1730*, (Cambridge, 1977).

thus only just overlaps with the period which is the concern of this thesis, he finds evidence of large numbers of women who cannot sign their names and whose social status he considers below that of the husbandman and tradesman group. More than eight out of ten of a sample of over five thousand women of all social groups could not make a signature, which is the test Cressy uses to indicate literacy.[202] Although attempts were made throughout the century to reinvigorate popular education - and there was significant educational expansion - the probability is that considerable numbers of ordinary women who worked as female midwives had no access to midwifery or other texts because of illiteracy. Henry Daventer offers evidence of incidences of illiteracy amongst midwives in his *The Art of Midwifery Improved*.[203] Perhaps because I have found Daventer a most active celebrant of the utility of female midwives, he can be seen as a reliable source of information about the ones he met. His sympathetic stance separates him from the prejudice and wrangling which characterises the debate over the control of obstetrics. Daventer constantly describes situations, disastrous and otherwise, which have been overseen by totally uneducated female midwives.

By way of contrast to Schörrenberg and Rich is Virginia Maclean's introduction to a comprehensive work on household books, which stresses a connection between the 'displacement' of medical advice in cookbooks and the production of specialised medical books.[204] Many of these medical texts, as Maclean points out, incorporate the very latest bio-medical findings with their use of scientific observation and analysis, in order to justify treatment within systems of bodily management. In claiming that many medical books were far too technical to be understood by ordinary housewives, however, Maclean voices what is implied by writers such as William Cadogan, John Wesley, and William Buchan. Their undertakings to instruct the public were, to some extent, motivated by what was seen as a conspiracy to professionalise medicine. Buchan, especially, considered an impediment to allowing advances in knowledge

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[202] Ibid. pp.2-12. Cressy cautiously acknowledges the possibility that some of these non-writers may have been able to read.

[203] Daventer op.cit., p. 4.

[204] Maclean, op.cit., xix.

about the human body and its management to percolate to all levels of society. By the second half of the eighteenth century, medical discourse might be classed in two ways. One kind was heavily indebted to current scientific research and was chiefly intended for a male audience. The other form - household health texts - was deliberately intended to reach a much wider audience: in some ways it provides a supplement to, or even a replacement for self-help information included in cookery writing, and also to what is often advertised as 'new' medical information within this. Of course, it could be said of discourse produced for today's readers, that the publications intended to accompany, or to supplement, professional medical courses are radically different from, for example, a much-reprinted text such as Benjamin Spock's *Baby and Child Care* (1955).[205] An important difference, however, is that such popular texts today are not at odds with the information made available to the profession. The main differences lie in the amount of detail included, and in the extent to which medical terms are used in isolation from more readily available explanations of their meanings.

Kaufman's evidence about the holdings, borrowings, and membership of subscription and circulating libraries complements what is implied by Maclean, that medical texts would generally not have been available to a female audience. His detailed analysis of library records appears to negate Rivers' conclusion that any literate woman, of high or low class, could select from a large number of printed works, including all branches of scientific knowledge. Kaufman suggests that women's physical access to medical texts devoted to the female body was significantly limited during the period in question. This is partly due to the small percentage of women holding membership of the community libraries, but also because of discrepancies in the natural history, science and medical sections of the limited number of different libraries whose records were available for Kaufman's research purposes.[206]

The medical texts in question offer their own evidence about their largely male, professional readership. This exclusivity will be central to my argument about the ways in which medical and biological texts were popularised during the eighteenth century,

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[205] Benjamin Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, (London, 1955); Penelope Leach, *Baby and Child*, (London, 1977). See Leach's A-Z Reference section, p.139, for examples of medical terms such as allergic rhinitis.
[206] Kaufman, *Borrowings*, op.cit.;Idem. *Libraries*, op.cit., pp 199 - 200.

and how this affected what women were thinking about maternity. Some medical texts are dedicated to London's Royal Society, or to individual doctors.[207] Of course, in isolation, this is flimsy evidence indeed of the readership of any particular work. Certain people, or groups, however, may receive a dedication on account of their patronage, or for the private, perhaps sycophantic reasons of the author. As a device which is used both in conduct literature and also in some narrative fiction, such dedications may be seen as giving an indication of the *intended* gender of the reader, and this is what we are concerned with in this account. John Burton's account of midwifery, together with John Mowbray's address to his readers (to which I shall return shortly), and Smellie's diplomatically cautious yet courteous acknowledgement of the midwife's limitations, serve to cast doubt upon modern claims that, assuming some female midwives were able to read, they were as likely to be of equal 'professional' calibre as their male equivalents.[208]

Burton's preface to *An Essay Towards a Complete New System of Midwifry* (1751) addresses a male audience as he proposes the study of midwifery as a science which requires special instruments.[209] The gender of his readers is obvious because, throughout the eighteenth century, the collection of steel instruments referred to, which included small forceps, blunt hooks, scissors, and curve crotchets, were always to be found solely in the male midwife's bag.[210] Other medical works advertise themselves as journals for the consideration of "Learned" physicians or, at the very least, for "Experienced Practisers of Midwifery." [211] Smellie admits, in the preface to the *Treatise on the Theory and Practice of Midwifery* (1752-1754) that his work is principally intended for the use of the pupils he has taught for the past ten years:

> ... the work being principally undertaken with a view to refresh the memory of those who have attended me, and for the instruction of young

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[207] See John Reynolds, *A Discourse upon Prodigious Abstinence*, (London, 1669); Bracken, op.cit.
[208] See footnote 199.
[209] Burton, op.cit., Preface.
[210] Schorrenberg, op.cit., p.394.
[211] Mowbray, op.cit., Preface, xvii. Mowbray's insistence, in Preface, v, upon the educated status of his intended readership also sustains this argument.

> practitioners in general, I thought it was necessary to mention every thing that might be useful in the course of practice.[212]

Smellie had, by the time his revised lecture notes went to press, taught almost nine hundred male pupils, but only a tiny fraction of this number of female midwives; his intended audience was clearly male.[213]

Although later in the century the name 'midwife' is used to denote women who may have no formal training at all, this text suggests a degree of etymological change as the name 'midwife' serves to acknowledge a formal qualification for men, and distinguishes them from untrained, 'old women'.[214] Mowbray was himself summoned by the College of Physicians for practising without a licence and the College subseqently introduced a formal training for male accoucheurs. Similar proposals for women's training, some even as late as 1813, were repeatedly refused by the College.[215] Despite the efforts of Smellie and Manningtree, and a few minor undertakings for female training in mid-century London, little was done to allow female 'midwives' access to the dissections and anatomy which provided the basis of the new understanding of the female body.[216]

This lack of access to anatomical information is even borne out in some of the literature written especially for literate female midwives by other women of great experience, some of whom have received more formal training. A handful of respected female midwives, pupils of Smellie or the Parisian Hospital, request an anatomy-based training for female operators within the texts written for other female midwives.[217] The ways in which Sarah Stone and Martha Mears contradict themselves in order to avoid offending "the chaste eye", however, indicate that a concept of feminine modesty based upon obscuring and hiding part or all of the body is intimately allied with the male professional secrecy so vigorously condemned by Elizabeth Nihell as the underlying

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212 Smellie, op.cit., Preface, iii.
213 James Aveling, *English Midwives*, (London, 1872), p.117.
214 *E.N.M.C.*, p.9; *D.M.*, p.6.
215 Aveling, op.cit., p.153, (The Society of Apothecaries attempted to secure formal training in midwifery for women.)
216 Ibid. p.143.
217 Sarah Stone *A Complete Practice of Midwifery*, (London, 1737); Martha Mears *The Pupil of Nature*, (London, 1797), p.7.

reason for inaccessible knowledge of the body.[218] Whilst Stone remarks that it is not "improper" to have seen, like her, "several women open'd", none of this experience is shared with her reader.[219] Mears conveys only practical hints in her manual. Her work is equally self-conscious on matters relating precisely to female anatomy: she insists that she will not digress to "needless discourses on the Parts of Generation, nor the Reasons of Conception."[220] Blunt requests that training for women should be based upon familiarity with all the anatomical features of the female form:

> They should be taught the increase of the gravid uterus, from conception to delivery by Smellie or Hunter's large plates.[221]

Fewer than one in a hundred have this knowledge, he claims.[222] Blunt also vouches for the need for teaching of this kind by boldly allowing his reader to 'eavesdrop' on some private comments allegedly made by a male teacher responsible for the education of women midwives:

> That teachers of midwifery do not give their female pupils sufficient instructions, I can prove; for I have heard a lecturer say, 'I wish no midwife to know what the *os uteri* is; I never tell them, if I can help it.'[223]

Despite construction of comprehensive curricula for the training of women, midwifery texts themselves offer further evidence which suggests that anatomical pictures and information remained highly inaccessible to women.[224] Even when the stated authorial intent is to invite women readers to learn about anatomy, it is implied that what is taught differs from what is learned by male-midwives. Bracken is emphatic that, in the

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[218] Elizabeth Nihell *Treatise on the Art of Midwifery*, (London, 1760). Nihell provides a violent argument against Smellie and his school of midwifery. A fuller exploration of the meanings of modesty will be undertaken in the following Chapter about eighteenth-century conduct literature.

[219] S. Stone, op.cit., preface, xv, xviii.

[220] Mears, op.cit., p.7.

[221] [John Blunt], (pseud.) *Man-Midwifry Dissected*, (London, 1793), p.184.

[222] Ibid. p.173.

[223] Ibid. p.180.

[224] During the last two decades of the eighteenth century, there appears to have been a resurgence of calls, within midwifery texts, for the formal training of female operators.

event of an obstetric emergency, only a man, who "thoroughly understands the Anatomy of a human Body", is able to help.[225] Although my account does not attempt to draw a direct analogy between 'professional' trends such as these and the concurrent treatment of anatomical investgations in popular literature for a female audience, the nature of this 'professional' organisation during the period admits the possibility of interchange.

There are a few texts, however, written by male practitioners, which advertise themselves as books for the enlightenment and instruction of female midwives. The inside cover of a third edition of one of these at the Cambridge University Library is even inscribed in ink with a woman's name - Dorothy Parkington - and the same date as that of publication, 1733.[226] The implication is that this woman owned the book herself, and although the first Chapter promises to compensate for a lack of the "True Notions of Anatomy", it is unlikely that Dorothy would have gleaned anything like the sort of anatomical detail fom this manual that would compare with that of her male counterpart. There is one picture of the unborn child, but the author deliberately shies away from exposing any more of the female body, in either description or picture:

> ... there is no need to expose those Parts [of female generation] here, whose figures rather serve to excite impure Thoughts, and give occasion to obscene Discourse, more than necessary Instructions, therefore for Modesty sake we shall pass them by here.[227]

If Edmund Chapman, a physician with twenty-seven years' experience, had ever read Davanter's manual, he certainly did not consider it remotely designed for the use of women operators. Chapman claims, in his preface, that his own book is unique because all those previously produced concerning midwifery have been written for male midwives:

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[225] Bracken, op.cit., p.146.
[226] Henrik Daventer, *The Art of Midwifery Improv'd*, 1728; 3rd. ed., (London, 1733).
[227] Ibid. p.61.

> As all the Books hitherto published on this Subject have been calculated chiefly for the Instruction of my own Sex, I was induced to write this Treatise principally for the Use of the other, to whom the Majority of Practice in this important and difficult Profession is committed.[228]

There is, however, striking similarity between Chapman and Daventer in their treatment of these women who "never saw the *Dissection* of a Human Body."[229] Chapman has also "purposely omitted the Description of the Parts concerned in *Generation*", and again this is for reasons of propriety.[230] Another text produced shortly after these also yields very little of the detailed anatomical description and explanation which characterises medical and midwifery texts for male readers. John Douglas states his intention that *A Short Account of Midwifery* (1736) should be used "to enable the Midwoman to perform their Office in all cases", yet the whole work is preoccupied with anecdotal cases of male and female incompetence.[231] Had she spent two shillings on the purchase of this text, Dorothy Parkington would have gleaned little information from it, except for an "Explication of the Latin words which occur in Quotations".[232] Besides this, there is little sign of a comprehensive scientific approach, but plenty of professional politics and tedious, unending criticism of other practitioners and writers on the topic.[233] The implications of this evidence are that even female midwives, arguably the group of women who had the most worthy reasons for learning about female anatomy, would have had a limited, patchy, or perhaps no exposure to the products of a vigorous male medical interest in exposing the female body and exploring its generative capability.

Midwifery writings articulate a prevailing sense of the need for secrecy in the 'exposure' of human anatomical knowledge to women in particular, for reasons both professional and social. The treatment of female anatomy, especially in midwifery, health and household texts, augments intricate patterns of concealing the female form

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228 Edmund Chapman, *A Treatise on the Improvement of Midwifery*, 1733; 2nd. ed., (London, 1735), Preface p. i.
229 Ibid. Preface, xiii.
230 Ibid. Preface, xiii.
231 John Douglas, *A Short Account of the State of Midwifery in London*, (London, 1736), Title page.
232 Ibid. Title page.
233 Ibid. pp.20, 24, 53.

from female eyes. These, it seems, together with the 'exposed', dissected female image in certain writing for a male audience, contribute to a complex web of uncertainties and mystifications endemic in the treatment of maternity in eighteenth-century medical and 'lay-medical' discourse.

In conclusion, one particular image, that of the dissected gravid uterus revealing mother's and child's bodies in intimate original confluence, is prominently displayed in numerous medical texts. The production of a child confers a special, ideal, even at times, asexual status upon the woman's body; this idealisation is registered and reflected by the language used in order to depict mother and child. During a period which witnessed the development of pre-industrial commercial values, this maternal image is at the core of an emerging secular belief in the natural function of the woman's body, and its role outside the immediate world of commerce.

Whilst the mother's body is idealised, however, it is simultaneously demystified: understanding its processes rationalises its reproductive function. These factors may be what Rousseau is ambiguously referring to when he talks of women gaining "a new sense of themselves" as a process rooted in early eighteenth-century anatomy.[234] This is one of a number of recent studies which do not acknowledge variations in the vast body of literature about maternity which became publicly available.

My findings show that the popularisation of such anatomical investigations did not wholly consist of a direct migration of information and ideas from medical to numerous other forms of discourse: this appears to be an absolute assumption which obscures cultural anxieties aroused by the medicalisation of maternity. The "vast form of literature on pregnancy, childbirth, infanticide, breast-feeding, wet-nursing, swaddling, and illegitimacy" which Jordanova claims sought to teach women about their own generative function, and which have been explored in this Chapter, typically avoid anatomical justifications for the maternal role which they advocate, and are allied, in interesting ways, with a corpus of eighteenth-century conduct literature.[235]

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[234] Rousseau, op.cit., p.213.
[235] Jordanova, op.cit., p.96.

The gender of the *intended* reader of a text is a crucial factor in the treatment of medical maternal images and debate within it. As we have seen, however, especially in the case of periodicals, it is particularly difficult to ascertain whether a magazine's readership was gender-exclusive. Evidence suggested by womens' interest in natural history as well as in health-care points to the likelihood of their sharing in the prevailing curiosity about all aspects of the somatic. Whilst the contents and changes made to ladies' periodicals suggest that men also read them, a series of letters in volume twenty of *The Gentleman's Magazine* acknowledges some female readers.[236] Another letter, almost certainly that of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, admits the possibility that some female readers may have had partial access to the debate concerning female anatomy.[237] Uncertainty may have been fostered by incomplete glimpses of these 'new views of themselves', and by the oral transmission of ideas and information about the functions of the female body which are not directly discussed in household health manuals after a period of gradual demise in cookbook physick.

I must agree, in part, with Rousseau's view that the process of women finding a fresh identity during the eighteenth century has its roots in anatomy. However, my findings have shown that the treatment and popularisation of anatomical discoveries produce more than one complete sense of female and especially of maternal identity. The mother's body is exposed, idealised, and a 'natural' role is ascribed to it in relation to these. Her body is also censored; her physical presence and biological images of the gravid uterus which justify 'natural' maternal behaviour are not included in texts for a female audience. It is Rousseau's choice of the word 'identity' which appears to mask what my findings attempt to illuminate. Certainly, a 'natural' identity as a mother is drawn from pictures of female anatomy. Women are ascribed a maternal role during the period in question, and this is conveyed in health manuals as well as other literature which teaches women how to behave. However, the treatment of images and debate relating to these bio-medical findings also produce a pattern which overlays the absent, idealised and exposed body of the woman, mystifying and remystifying it in patterns

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[236] *G.M.*, XX (1750), pp.109, 312, 413.

[237] This letter shows remarkable similarity to one in Halsband, op.cit., II (1721-1751), p.25; *G.M.*, IX (1739), p.525.

which suggest a fractured and complex sense of gender-identity rather the the 'whole', comfortable one which Rousseau's conclusion implies.

Chapter Two.

The Natural Role of the Mother's Body: The Discomfort within Eighteenth-Century Conduct Literature.

Introduction.

In the last decade of the eighteenth century, Mary Wollstonecraft launched a furious attack on the conduct writers of the day in her *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792).[1] A few conduct writers, including Dr Fordyce and Dr Gregory, were especially singled out for censure and it seems likely that her criticism was also more generally aimed at many other comparable writers. In a sense, she was thematically renewing Mary Astell's complaint about the behaviour of women almost a century earlier.[2] At the root of Wollstonecraft's anger was what she saw as the homogenisation of women and children. She rejected parallels between womanhood and a "state of perpetual childhood" in this body of eighteenth-century literature which sought to teach women how to behave.[3] Their refusal to recognise differences between the status of a woman and that of a child she attributed to the need to somehow "secure the good conduct of women."[4] If there are solid foundations for Wollstonecraft's claims, then it would seem that a large corpus of the eighteenth-century conduct writing produced for women readers failed to reflect notions of the special body of the woman: this body was the subject of medical preoccupation, and research findings were being debated and explained by medical men throughout the eighteenth century. The relationship between conduct and medical writing, and what it contributes to an understanding of eighteenth-century concepts of the female, will be the subject of this Chapter.

Conduct literature - that which explicitly seeks to teach appropriate modes of behaviour to its readers - has much in common with the medical writing of the period in

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[1] Mary Wollstonecraft, *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, 1792; M. Brody, Ed. (Harmondsworth, 1985), pp. 79, 111-112, 195.
[2] Mary Astell, 'Serious Proposal to the ladies'.'1696; in Bridget Hill, Ed. *The First English Feminist*, (Aldershot, 1986), pp. 144, 146, 160.
[3] Wollstonecraft, *Vindication*, op.cit., p.81.
[4] Ibid. p.101.

question. Both forms of writing were concerned with the visible evidence offered by the body and its processes, and about how this could be used to understand the natural order of the world. Because of this, conduct literature can be seen as a form of lay-medical writing. This relationship between eighteenth-century medical writing and conduct advice offers potentially rich pickings for this enquiry into the literary treatment of medical representations of the maternal body. It seems that only very recently has conduct literature itself become of interest to historians, and as a genre, it has often been imprecisely defined. Because of this, and because this Chapter will be primarily concerned with the special features of eighteenth-century conduct literature, it is important to establish the historical context of eighteenth-century conduct writing. Conduct writing in its different forms can be traced back as far as Medieval times. Despite major differences between, for instance, sixteenth- and seventeenth-century devotional works, and nineteenth-century etiquette guides, a few features apply to all.

A basic working definition for this study is that conduct literature discusses the theory of manners and tells its readers how to behave. The main concern of conduct writers has not been to describe the manners as practised by their contemporaries, but to establish standards of behaviour which should be followed, and which accord with certain basic beliefs about the human condition. Another feature common to conduct manuals produced before and during the eighteenth century - and which is even found, to some extent, in today's advice about appropriate modes of behaviour - is that they are intended for specific groups of readers. The most obvious divisions are gender divisions. There is separate advice for men, women and children, although some also incorporate occupational and social status alongside these divisions. This Chapter will concentrate upon conduct literature which addressed itself to women, although some material published for a male audience, and some conduct advice for children, will be used to illuminate the argument.

Eighteenth-century conduct literature comprises an identifiable literary genre which is distinct in several significant ways from conduct literature produced before and after. There remains the potential for investigation into its tone, content and influence because these distinctions have largely been by-passed. Joanna Dales, for instance, has

employed the term 'conduct literature' to include Puritan devotional writing of the seventeenth century, as well as that which was produced during the following century, when Puritanism as an identifiable movement had ceased to exist.[5] The selection of conduct literature which will be the subject of the rest of this Chapter places emphasis upon the behavioural transcription of a moral code which is based on religious doctrine, but is not exclusive to it. Instead it is concerned with what conduct writers perceived as virtually bipolar commercial and domestic worlds. Critical approaches to the subject of conduct literature which consolidate diverse forms of conduct writing at the outset, limit extremely subtle and complex representations of the domestic environment, and the women therein. Fenela Childs acknowledges the need for such clarity in her study of manners and the social implications of differences between pre-eighteenth century and eighteenth century advice for behaviour suitable to each sex.[6] Childs' study mentions how eighteenth-century manners in particular were centred on the body and its functions. Her focus, however, is quite different from my own. Childs neither employs, nor identifies a relationship between conduct literature and medical writing, nor does she concentrate attention upon any one area of conduct subject-matter.

One of the aims of this Chapter is to explain how the unique position of eighteenth-century conduct literature in relation to the growth of specific scientific knowledge helps to account for certain features of conduct literature intended for women. Unlike those which were produced before and after the first six or so decades of the eighteenth century, conduct manuals specifically of this period use the evidence of the body as proof of their authenticity. They are also unlike etiquette books, which do not discuss justification for the norms they prescribe. Childs' account of the decline in religious influences upon conduct writing seems to circumvent the issue of anatomy: it is argued that although overt religious influence in men's conduct literature had declined by 1715 or so, there was also a marked decrease in traditional Christian prescriptions of modesty and chastity at this time (266-268). Childs also claims, however, that the source of the eighteenth-century womanly ideal is in Christian

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[5] Joanna Dales, 'The Novel as Domestic Conduct-Book.', (Ph.D., Cambridge Univ., 1970).
[6] *E.C.L.*, pp. 17-21.

doctrine, yet this contradiction is not acknowledged, and remains tantalisingly unexplained . More generally in the latter account, it is claimed that only factors such as the growth of an urban reading population, a thriving publishing industry, and the growth of middle class participation in leisure activities, influenced the formation and dissemination of conduct literature. At a time when the publication of conduct books for women actually surpassed in quantity and variety those directed at men, conduct literature made a significant contribution to eighteenth-century ideas about the woman's body.[7] In this account, I want to show how the influence of biomedical investigations into female anatomy also deserves a prominent place on Childs' list of factors which had a significant bearing upon the production and content of eighteenth-century conduct material.

Some modern commentators have already had plenty to say about the conduct literature of the period and 'feminine identity'. This has, however, largely concentrated upon conduct literature as an unspecified part of a corpus of published works printed during the middle and later part of the century. Patricia Meyer Spacks links her study of an indeterminate adolescent period to the effects of narrative fiction, and to a body of eighteenth-century conduct literature which purports to describe a conceivable code of feminine behaviour.[8] Wollstonecraft, Mary Astell, and 'Sophia', would probably have approved of Carol Houlihan Flynn's accounting for this problematic notion of an emergent feminine code of conduct under the umbrella of "schemes of internalised repression."[9] These schemes, Flynn says, operate across many forms of discourse, including conduct manuals, medical texts, and novels. Investigations such as these 'group together' several forms of eighteenth-century writing as part of their analysis of an emergence of feminine identity during this period.

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[7] See Todd, op.cit., p.4, for a conflicting argument. Todd barely mentions the role played by conduct literature in the popularisation of eighteenth-century notions of sensibility: instead, she regards fiction as the means by which the cult of sensibility was largely defined. For evidence of the increase in conduct literature publications for women, see eds. Nancy Armstrong and Leonard Tennenhouse, *The Ideology of Conduct*, (London, 1987), p.4.

[8] Patricia Meyer Spacks, *The Adolescent Idea*, 1981; 2nd ed., (London, 1982), p.37.

[9] Astell, op.cit.; Sophia, (pseud.), *Woman not inferior to man*, (London, 1739); Wollstonecraft, *Vindication*, op.cit.; Carol Houlihan Flynn, *The Body in Swift and Defoe*, (Cambridge, 1990), p.37.

The differences inherent in various forms of writing have not been taken into account in some historical criticism. This helps to hide some of the intricacies in the treatment of 'natural' domestic arrangements in the conduct literature of the period. Conversely, certain other modern means of differentiation can also be seen as simplifying eighteenth-century presentation. Contemporary Western concepts of womanhood and childhood as distinct 'provinces', have been applied to studies of the early eighteenth century by social historians such as Ivy Pinchbeck and Margaret Hewit, Stone, Pollock, and Ariés.[10] Of course, as Pollock points out, such accounts rarely agree with each other, because some researchers seek to exclude alternative theories which 'encroach' upon each singular thesis.[11] Pollock's criticism of Ariés' view of a developing 'dimension' of childhood during the eighteenth century illustrates yet another particular problem inherent in these approaches to childhood as a province distinct from all others. Ariés argues that, during the late seventeenth century, the child was considered to be in a separate province because it was of little significance to its parents.[12] He goes on to say that, owing to changing attitudes towards children, they became a special group which was regarded as separate from the world of adults.[13] Surely, Pollock claims, this is illogical; separation meant that children counted even less. Again, separate provinces of adult and childhood are assumed, and they converge and diverge rather clumsily. Both notions of distinct provinces of woman and child, however, fail to acknowledge the intimate and multidimensional relationship which existed between the two groups.

Eighteenth-century conduct literature for women represented the woman's natural role as a nurturing one, and one which was physically very close to her children. At the same time, their physical existences were merged in other ways: women were often to be seen barely distinguishable from children in their behaviour, and it is possible to draw significant parallels between conduct literature for women, and that

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[10] Ivy Pinchbeck and Margaret Hewit, *Children in English Society*, (London, 1969); L. Stone, op.cit.; Pollock, op.cit.; Ariés, op.cit.

[11] Pollock, op.cit., p.262.

[12] Dales, op.cit., p.26. Dales understands the central position of Philippe Ariés' thesis in *Centuries of Childhood*, 1960; Tr. R. Baldick, (Harmondsworth, 1986), as precisely the opposite to this. Her argument, however, fails to acknowledge the sociological evidence, such as high rates of infant mortality, which sustains Ariés' argument.

[13] Ibid. p.55.

which was intended for children. Some aspects of these physical relationships and equations between woman and child will be of particular interest in this Chapter, which seeks to illuminate the extent and nature of representations of the biomedical maternal ideal in lay-medical literature.

i. Women with Children, and Women as Children.

Historical considerations of the woman's identity and role are often explored separately from those interested in the child and notions of childhood. Surprisingly limited critical attention seems to have been paid to the relationship between the two within the domestic arena. This is in spite of considerable current interest in eighteenth-century domestic arrangements, the evolution of a concept of childhood, ideas of sensibility, and the expression of feminine identity within literature. Central to this Chapter is an examination of potential interrelations between apparently contradictory depictions of women as and with children.

As we saw in the previous Chapter, eighteenth-century medical writers emphasized the intimacy between mother and child, and almost universally insisted upon their close physical contact after the child was born. The mother's nurture of her child was to take place exclusively within the special confines of the domestic environment. This medically-authenticated arrangement, in which the child maintained intimate contact with its mother's body, points to the need to consider the treatment of the child as an obvious means of illuminating prescriptions of a natural maternal role, and the meanings associated with her body.

The representation of the child promises a rich source of suggestions about the mother, and some attention will be directed towards how the child was told to behave, and what this reveals about the natural state of child and of mother. Suggestions within women's conduct literature itself provide still further reason to explore the representation of the child in conduct literature in conjuction with its mother. Writers of both sexes criticised the childish behaviour of some women. Women were, it seemed, imitating the actions of children in a way which confused their status with that of the

child. As I shall show, through their angry condemnation of this tactic, some writers made little distinction, either physical or mental, between women and children. This and the intimate collocation of woman and child in medical prescriptions of natural mothering overlay each other in interesting ways, and both have much to offer this attempt to recover what eighteenth-century readers were being taught about the mother's physical state of being.

The focal thesis of both Philippe Ariés and Robert Pattison is best summarised in Pattison's own words: "a child represents a golden age, or idyllic period" which begins to be defined as a distinct province prior to the eighteenth century, and which gradually embraces those beyond the age of seven or so.[14] This distinction appeared to be a relatively recent one to John Bunyan, as it precipitated his grumbles about the latest demarcations between adult and childhood:

> We now have Boys with Beards, and Girls that be Big as old Women, wanting Gravity.[15]

The position of children during the eighteenth century, is a well-debated point. Historians as theoretically far apart as Lawrence Stone, Ariés, and Michel Foucault suggest that it was the eighteenth century which saw the development of a concept of childhood, and that this had much to do with the rise in the number of living children during the first half of the century, and consequently a falling birth rate.[16] Others, including Linda Pollock and Warren Wooden, disagree, or imply disagreement with this view.[17] They argue that, in England, childhood as a state which is fundamentally different from adulthood had been identified as early as the English Renaissance.[18] In view of these contradictions, I have attempted my own limited analysis of the sort of primary material from which these historians draw their conclusions. I have looked at

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[14] Ariés, op.cit., p.316; Idem. *Images of Man and Death*, 1985; Tr. Janet Lloyd. (London, 1985); Robert Pattison, *The Child Figure in English Literature*, (Athens, 1978), p 49.

[15] John Bunyan, *A Book for Boys and Girls*, 1686; Facs. ed., (London, 1890), Address to the reader.

[16] See Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage*, 1977; 2nd ed., (Harmondsworth, 1979); Ariés, *Centuries*, op.cit.; Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 1976; Tr. Robert Hurley. (London, 1979).

[17] Linda Pollock, *Forgotten Children*, (Cambridge, 1983); Warren Wooden, *Children's Literature of the English Renaissance*, (Kentucky, 1986).

[18] See Wooden, op.cit., Introduction, xi. Pollock, op.cit., p. 262.

ten years' records from three very different parishes in Cambridgeshire between the years 1700-1705 and 1745-1750, in order to test out the theory that, with the birth rate dropping between these years, the child's value and status could have begun to alter accordingly. In relation to this Chapter, this is important because of the overlapping statuses of woman and child which are to be discussed.

My findings from the records of Grantchester, a small rural farming community, St Giles', a parish near Cambridge town centre, and Linton St.Mary's, a comparatively large Cambridgeshire village, reveal barely any change in the birth rates between these periods.[19] During the period 1700-1705 in Linton, for example, 130 infants were baptised, and of these, twenty-seven are recorded as having been buried within a year of birth. Surprisingly, these parish figures include illegitimate or "base born" children. Between 1745-1750, 127 infants were baptised, which shows a very small decline when compared to the earlier figures. Of these, exactly the same number as before, twenty-seven, died before their first birthdays. These results - showing a decline so minor that it cannot be considered significant - are also borne out in the other districts. Mention made of wives dying in childbirth, with no corresponding baptism or burial entry, suggest that infant death rates were probably considerably higher than the figures indicate, and even that the figures are a fairly unreliable source for accurately establishing demographic features.

What I think is particularly significant about these records, however, is that, by the mid-century, a noticeable trend had developed amongst the record-keepers. This was the careful inclusion of details of each child's parents. Occasionally, parental occupations and other information which would have clearly distinguished them within their communities, is also added. The word 'child' also begins to appear, as does the sex of the infant: the later practice of including this information gives a much bolder impression of the child's identity. Its sex is also clearly established as the records include specific information about whose son or daughter is being referred to: clearly, this gives the impression of the child's importance as an addition to, and within, a

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[19] T.P.R. Layng, comp., *Grantchester, Cambridgeshire, Parish Register, 1539-1851*, (Cambridge, 1977); N.K. Travers, comp., *St. Giles, Cambridge, Parish Register, 1585-1860*, (Cambridge, 1990); Layng, comp., *St.Mary's, Linton, Cambridgeshire, Parish Register, 1559-1844*, (Cambridge, 1970).

family. The alterations in the form of record keeping, then, rather than the figures themselves, point towards the changing importance of the status of the child during the eighteenth century.

I want to return, briefly, to Pattison's profile of childhood during the period, because one feature which promises to be especially interesting with relation to the locus of women and child is, rather untypically, disregarded. In the context of discussing the symbolic significance of a snake coiled around Tommy's leg (see fig[ ) at the beginning of a story otherwise saturated with Biblical symbolism, Pattison dismisses the possibility of its sexual suggestiveness.[20] In spite of this, he subsequently refers to a mysterious "darker, more traditional view of nature and childhood."[21] As we shall see, ways in which the issue of sexuality quietly pervaded the child's 'sinless' state are, at best, circumvented by Pattison. Nor does Pollock's idea concerning parental fear of a child's energy, against a background of belief in Original Sin, explain this dimension more fully.[22] Michel Foucault, by contrast, does distinguish a sexual theme in his consideration of children: even in his work, however, excepting a brief mention of the woman's role as educator, it is in chronological isolation from what he regards as the sexual 'management' of women.[23] In addition, Foucault's claim that children were "defined as preliminary sexual beings" seems crudely scientific.[24] It obscures the subtle ways in which the statuses of woman and child mesh together. It circumvents what cannot simply be attributed to a 'dangerous dividing line' of adolescence. Testing out the accusations made against prescriptions of feminine behaviour by some of the critical commentaries mentioned earlier provides a starting point for this study of how conduct manuals depicted women and children. As we shall see, the comments of Pattison and Foucault bypass or simplify a sexual issue which helped to precipitate, and pervaded, eighteenth-century conduct literature in numerous ways.

Lord Chesterfield's notorious observation - that women were merely "children of a larger growth" - epitomised the dispute, during the eighteenth century, between

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[20] Thomas Day, *The History of Sandford and Merton*, (London, 1783-1789), Frontispiece.
[21] Pattison, op.cit., p.55.
[22] Pollock, op.cit., p.102.
[23] Foucault, op.cit., pp. 75-132.
[24] Ibid. part 4, pp.75-132.

writers of both sexes, respecting the physical and intellectual capacity of women.[25] It is ironic, therefore, that Wollstonecraft chose to single Chesterfield out for praise in her *Vindication*, although her admiration was certainly not for all of the contents of his work.[26] Mary Astell's well-received *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies* (1696-1697) used criticism of what the author saw as the conscious practice of women adopting childish modes of behaviour, in order to argue her case for private female retreats.[27] Women's apparent state of "incapacity" and their taste for "Toys and Baubles" meant that they were barely distinct from children.[28]

Across the body of literature which outlined 'proper' conduct for an emerging bourgeois reading public, and in reaction to this, a debate concerning these associations of young children with women continued. 'Sophia's' hostile reaction to George Savile's contradictory claims about the rational capability of a woman preceded what has been regarded as the conservative advice offered by Mrs Chapone to her 'niece'.[29] Chapone made a pointed distinction between the states of childhood and womanhood. This complex pattern of ways in which notions of womanhood and childhood overlap in the conduct writing produced during the period, is either sequestered away within ambiguities and verbal vagueness in some modern historical enquiries, or else 'broken down' in a way which dissociates and hides meaning.

Titles such as John Nelson's *An Essay on the Government of Children* (1753) Colley Cibber's *The Lady's Lecture* (1748) and the fourth Earl of Chesterfield's *Principles of Politeness* (1775) show how individual works of the literature which set out to define appropriate modes of conduct, addressed themselves to specific

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[25] Chesterfield, Philip Dormer Stanhope, fourth Earl of, *Letters ... to his son*, 1774; 12th ed., (London, 1803), 5 Sept. 1748.

[26] Wollstonecraft, *Vindication*, p.207. Wollstonecraft approved of Chesterfield's belief in the principle of early education.

[27] Mary Astell, 'A Serious Proposal to the Ladies.' 1696-1697, in Bridget Hill, Ed. *The First English Feminist*, (Aldershot, 1986). The serious proposal ran to four editions in six years. Such 'retreats' are explored in the fictional writings of Sarah Scott, *Millenium Hall*, 1762; intr. Jane Spencer, (London, 1986), and Fanny Burney, *The Wanderer*, 1814; intr. Margaret Drabble, (London, 1986). Their realisation, as Alice Browne points out in *The Eighteenth Century Feminist Mind*, (Brighton, 1987), p.42, may have come in the shape of girls' boarding schools.

[28] Browne, op.cit., pp.143, 160.

[29] Sophia, op.cit.; *L.G.* ; Hester Chapone, *Letters on the Improvement of the Mind*, 1773; new ed., (Dublin, 1786), pp.15, 80, 110.

audiences.[30] Inevitably, a sense of the distinct provinces 'occupied' by each group is produced, and with this comes the expectation that each will have a special behavioural identity ascribed to it. On the surface it seems that, contrary to the claims made by exasperated female commentators of the period, women were very deliberately being told not to be like children in the literature which delineated appropriate modes of behaviour for them.

ii. Teaching Women to Distinguish Themselves from Children.

I want to turn now to a consideration of how far, and in what ways, the woman's 'natural' condition, and her role, was likened to that of a child. Jane Collier's satirical sketch of how a woman ought to torment her husband and acquaintance was, she acknowledged, the antithesis to advice which directly taught women not to be like children.[31] Collier's essay, with its ironic disclaimer, stands alone as the one piece of advice amongst my selection of forty-two examples of conduct literature which apparently seriously encouraged women to behave in a childish manner, simply because this seemed to be "implanted" in their "natures" at birth.[32] For married women, Collier insisted, the sort of "delight" which "many" children took in "teazing and tormenting little dogs, cats, [and] squirrels", could equally be felt by behaving with "a childish pettishness" and "peevishness" toward their husbands, and with considerable cruelty towards those unfortunate enough not to be numbered amongst their favourite offspring.[33] Throughout the main body of conduct literature, however, childish behaviour exhibited by grown women was far from being condoned, even in jest.

Collier's close friend, Sarah Fielding, joined in the protest against those aged as young as eight who exhibited the kinds of behaviour outlawed by Mrs Teachum as

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[30] *E.G.*; Colley Cibber, *The Lady's Lecture*, (London, 1748); Chesterfield, Philip Dormer Stanhope, fourth Earl of, *Principles of Politeness*, (London, 1775).
[31] Jane Collier, *An Essay on The Art of ingeniously Tormenting*, (London, 1753). The 4th ed., 1806, has a frontispiece by the satirical artist Gillray.
[32] Ibid. p.6.
[33] Ibid. pp.73-91, 127, 216.

'childish'.[34] Meanwhile, numerous reprintings of George Savile's *Advice to a Daughter* (1688) throughout the eighteenth century, recommended that women acknowledge their own limited, rational capability.[35] Mistakes which children make for want of critical understanding are therefore, readers are told, to be studiously avoided:

> These Mistakes are therefore to be left off with your Hangingsleeves, and you ought to be as much out of countenance to be found with them about you, as to be seen playing with Babies, at an *Age* when other things are expected from you (7).

Likewise, Savile concludes, girlishness at the age of fifty is thoroughly undesirable. Richard Steele employed much stronger language as he emphasized the expectations placed upon a woman to behave in a manner distinctly different from that of a child. This theme runs through each of the three lengthy volumes of largely pilfered articles which comprise 'his' popular publication, *The Ladies' Library* (1714).[36] With Steele's characteristic dogmatism, a typical pattern of "inconceivable" perverseness and "the Petulancy of some Wives" is described in the first volume.(I, 146) Such indictments are thoroughly suffused with associations with the child. Mrs Chapone's advice similarly warns of a woman's natural bent towards, amongst other things, a childish peevishness, or a tendency to irritation on the slightest provocation, which the *O.E.D.* offers for the meaning of the word 'petulant' during the same period.[37] Samuel Johnson's *Dictionary of the English Language* (1755) provides further evidence of this connotation.[38] The word 'peevish' is one of Johnson's list of definitions of petulant behaviour. Two of the three synonyms with which the term 'petulant' is likened are 'childish' and 'childlike'.

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[34] Sarah Fielding, *The Governess, or Little Female Academy*, 1749; intr. Mary Cadogan, (London, 1986), p.94.

[35] Angela Smallwood, *Fielding and the Woman Question*, (Hertfordshire, 1989), p.2; Frances Brooke, *Emily Montague*, (London, 1769), p.62; see Dales, op.cit., p.25. This criticism, both recent and eighteenth-century, condemns Savile for precisely the kind of patriarchial endorsement of female subordination which several eighteenth-century commentators claim is the source of the would-be homogenising of woman and child.

[36] *L.L.* As Steele points out in his preface, *The Ladies' Library* was not written by him, but by "a lady." He claims to act as her "Gentleman-usher", but, as Myra Reynolds indicates in *The Learned Lady*, 1920; new ed., (Gloucester, Mass., 1964), pp.330-333, Steele drew on a collection of sources, written by both men and women, for his work. These included Astell, Locke, Taylor, and Halifax.

[37] Chapone, op.cit., p.80.

[38] Samuel Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language*, (London, 1755).

The association between women and undesirable childish behaviour was established through the idea of their mutually petulant behaviour, and in the second volume of *The Ladies' Library*, the use of the term 'petulant' serves to prefigure a sense of moral ambiguity and the sexual issue which corresponds with it. Steele also discussed the subject of adult adultery in conjunction with this sort of behaviour: God could not change his law regarding the sanctity of faithful marriage, he claimed, "to satisfie [sic] the Petulancy of a few Masterless Women" (II, 98). Petulant behaviour exposes those women who are unable to govern their sexual desires. The child's association with this form of behaviour inevitably draws it metaphorically closer to a 'dangerous' sexual dynamic. This suggests that such equivocal associations were an integral and important part of a framework of symbolic meanings which implicitly identified the pre-adolescent child with the sexual issue.

The unusually direct, enquiring voice of Colley Cibber's Sir Charles renewed this link between the child's desires, and an adult notion of virtue and bodily purity.[39] "How childish are our sensual Appetites", he insists, "to hope for Happiness exclusive of our Virtue."[40] Such desires had to be channelled in order to avoid what Bland coyly refused to name, except to say that caution must be exercised in entertaining volatile, childish passions which could manifest themselves in still more dangerous "inordinate Eruptions to any thing else."[41] Rather than explicitly telling women to act like children, conduct literature which addressed itself to a female audience warned repeatedly that the feminine identity should be clearly distinguishable from that of the child. It seems that the prevailing eighteenth-century mood of hostility towards the way in which women were being told to behave contradicted what was overtly stated throughout the conduct literature. Of particular note here, as women are urged not to behave like children, is what emerges about the child's identity.

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[39] Cibber, op.cit., p. 42.
[40] Ibid. p.42.
[41] James Bland, *An Essay in Praise of Women*, (London, 1733), p.211.

iii. Childish Appetite.

The child was at times depicted as the embodiment of purity, and yet as advice about childish behaviour illuminates, he or she was also seen as a creature personifying vanity, self-interest and unmitigated appetite.[42] Further manifestations of what Steele viewed as childish vanity and self-interest were also decried in these volumes. Dressing, for example, in ways which might attract sexual attention, was condemned as childish behaviour. It was a woman's duty to ensure that she did not spend too much time attending to her appearance:

> ... consuming Hours at her Glass, and contriving how to prepare herself for the unchaste Glances of wanton Spectators (I, 141).

A pejorative equation was made between an attractively dressed woman and a child. Her condemnation lay in the intimation that she was merely "still so much of the child as to admire every thing that glitters" (I, 195). This notion of childish vanity was reiterated when Steele told his female readership not to lie and defame, especially when there was no reason behind such pursuits. Speaking out against another's character was only permissible under certain circumstances, as, for instance, if a reader was to observe a sexually-motivated attack being made upon a young woman in the immediate vicinity. He exclaims:

> ... how preposterous that Silence, where a young gentleman sees his Companion, his Fellow-Clerk, levelling at the destruction of an innocent Girl, and not have the Soul to declare the guilty design till too late? (I, 243).

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[42] See, as representative examples of a very widely articulated idea, a utopian view of "all the virtues that originate in the heart" of the newborn child in Wollstonecraft, *The Female Reader*, 1789; Facs. ed. (New York, 1980), p.8; also, self-contradictory comments about the "innocent and untainted" child in Bland, op.cit., p.185, and similar inconsistencies in describing the "Innocence and Sincerity" of two tiny babies in Daniel Defoe, *The Family Instructor*, 1718; 12th ed., (London, 1741), p.67.

For the main part, lying and defaming for the singular purpose of self-gratification, was something which disclosed a degree of moral degeneracy. Steele's impassioned criticism, that "This is one of the most childish Vanities imaginable", clearly assigned this sort of behaviour to a group who were certainly not to be imitated, children (I, 383).

A number of other instructive works reveal increasingly sinister overtones in the recommendations made to women in order to encourage them to mark the distinctions between a state of mature womanhood and that of childhood. The unbelieving, and thus by default, inadequate mother in the first didactic tale of Daniel Defoe's *The Family Instructor* (1718) epitomises a state of wicked immorality. This mother provides a dire warning: as her chances of redemption grow increasingly remote, she becomes isolated from her pious family. A friend of her husband, observing and commenting upon her "entire Neglect of Right or Wrong", equates her moral standing with a person in an "Original State." Here, he does not refer to one who is merely in the pre-fall state of sinlessness such as that referred to, in the same text, when the author depicts some "pretty innocent Babies" who, having "something of the highest Principles of Christianity" in them, yet fall blameless victims to an indifferent nurse.[43] Subsequent details clarify the heathen mother's status. It is comparable to that of a newborn child before he or she has received the "Advantages of a better Education."[44] The infantile state is not wholly equated with purity, and a special closeness to God. Instead, it symbolises a primary wickedness and a knowing immorality.

The source of further misgivings with regard to a woman's display of childish behaviour centred around pastimes such as playing and entertainments. Pre-Lockean attitudes towards play and children's make-believe, such as those expressed by the Puritan voice of John Bunyan, were deeply sententious about children absorbed in play.[45] An analogy with the adult world is drawn at the end of each of Bunyan's poems, and forms a final explanatory stanza, which he calls a 'comparison'. One poem, for

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[43] Defoe, op.cit., pp.67, 349.
[44] Ibid. p.47.
[45] Bunyan, op.cit., poems, pp.28, 'Of the Boy and Butter Fly', 35 'On the Post-boy', 62 'Upon Death', 71, 'Upon the Disobedient Child'.

example, in which a small boy is completely diverted in the act of chasing a beautiful butterfly, interprets this playfulness, in the comparison, as an act of material indulgence:

> His running thorough [sic] Nettles, Thorns and Bryers,
> To gratifie his boyish fond desires.[46]

This, in turn, prepares him for a pattern of similarly unthinking, sensual gratification and perhaps even sexual appetite when he reaches maturity: the butterfly represents "painted Nothings and false Joys."[47] Precisely such fears apparently shaped John Wesley's advice to a school near Bristol during 1768. Similar reasons clearly underlie his insistence that the schoolday should be structured so as to avoid time for play:

> At five [o'clock in the morning] they [the children] all meet together. From six they work till breakfast; for as we have no play-days, (the school being taught every day in the year but Sunday,) so neither do we allow any time for play on any day: He that plays when he is a child, will play when he is a man.[48]

Similar undertones pervade the initial presentation of the female pupils at Mrs Teachum's girls' school.[49] Nine pupils, like Eve, "placed their desiring Eyes" upon a single apple, all that remains of a basket of fruit, given as a gift to the girls, and supposed to have been divided equally between them.[50] Ultimately, the inappropriately named and enraged Miss Dolly Friendly attacks the girl who pinched Miss Nancy Spruce. The attack is described as being as ferocious as that of a wild animal:

> Miss Dolly Friendly as yet was not engaged in the Battle: But on hearing her Friend Miss Nancy Spruce scream out, that she was hurt by a sly Pinch from one of the Girls, she flew on this sly Pincher, as she called

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[46] Ibid. p.28, 'Of The Boy and Butter Fly', stanza 1, l.10, comparison, l.8.
[47] Ibid. p.28, 'Of the Boy and Butter Fly', comparison, l.5.
[48] John Wesley, *A Short Account of The School in Kingswood, Near Bristol*, 1768; rep. (Michigan, 1958), p.285.
[49] Fielding, op.cit.; Clara Reeve, *The Progress of Romance*, (Colchester, 1785), pp.102-103. Reeve states that Fielding's text is for instructional use in schools.
[50] Fielding, op.cit., p.3.

> her, like an enraged lion on its Prey; and not content only to return the Harm her Friend had received, she struck with such Force, as felled her Enemy to the Ground. And now they could not distinguish between Friend and Enemy; but fought, scratch'd, and tore, like so many Cats, when they extend their Claws to fix them in their Rival's Heart.[51]

Again, an inherent sexual suggestion is reiterated in the image used to convey one girl's irrational physical indulgence of will during the ensuing fight. The equation between child and wild animal, as we will see later, strengthened this suffusion of images of the child with the mature woman's bodily desires through more than an abstract Biblical allusion: depictions of maternity were similarly identified with apes, and other lesser beasts whose total subjection to their every physical urge was assumed.

As the seventeenth turned into the eighteenth century, the influence of Locke's educational theories (which helped to form the framework for Rousseau's educational philosophy sixty years later) was already in evidence in works by Steele, Isaac Watts, Thomas Foxton, and an enterprising natural historian and publisher, Thomas Boreman. Steele isolated and denounced the entertainment which involved disguising the body; one subject which received special criticism was the practice of hiding the true form and identity of the body by adopting fictional personae. In making such complaints, he offers further evidence of the sinister undertones which were associated with the child and its behaviour. Surely with masquerades in mind, Steele tried to dissuade his readership from behaviour which he saw as both frivolous and potentially disastrous:

> ... by more serious Entertainments supplant those Vanities, which at best are Childish, and may often prove worse (II, 48).

The relationship here between self-indulgent child's play, and an ambiguous suggestion of serious moral degeneration, echoes a pre-Lockean mistrust of play, and a substructural fear of the child's desires. Defoe similarly located these with the

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[51] Ibid. p.4.

wickedness of a faithless wife who plots to murder her husband, and who is described as with her children and as a plaything herself thus:

> Three of them, [her children] out of Five, take part with their Mother; prepossess'd by her deluding Tongue, and by the Advantage she has of being always with them, wheedling and crying to them .... she was like her self, a Toy, gay and vain, empty of all that was good.[52]

One apothecary, James Bland, is not numbered amongst those authors who warned women not to behave like children, but he did insist that mothers should attempt to curb their children's appetites.[53] His choice of language reinforced what others' advice implied. He depicted a wayward child's demise, using language identical to that which apparently publicly exposes Clarissa's rape, Lovelace's successful seduction of the unwitting Rosebud, the sexual experience of Roxana's devoted maid, Amy, and the result of Miss Forward's Richardsonian abduction.[54] Bland told mothers that they must strictly control the wills of their children:

> Never admitting them to follow the Dictates of their childish Fancies, or gratify their giddy Heads, with untaught, unadvised, ungovernable Passions; for which they must at last be undone, was it not for their wholsome [sic] Chastisement, and Instruction in Virtue.[55]

Again, here, the way in which to be 'undone' denotes the woman's sexual activity outside marriage, 'sexualises' the child's appetites. This notion of childish appetite was, thematically speaking, intermeshed with the anxieties surrounding the licence for unrestrained expression and exploration of positive attachments which underlay much of the criticism concerned with the adoption of a fictional identity, an anxiety which was repeatedly articulated, well into the nineteenth century.[56]

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[52] Defoe, op.cit., p.48.
[53] Bland, op.cit., p.96.
[54] *Cl.*. p.370; *R.*, p.82; Eliza Haywood, *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless*, 1751; intr. Dale.Spender, (London, 1986), p.80.
[55] Bland, op.cit., p.96.
[56] Edward Gibbon, *Memoirs*, 1796; G.B. Hill, Ed. (London, 1900), p.26, for his rather hypocritical derision of William Law's sentimental discourse on the sacrilege of stage entertainments. Also *R.*,

Endemic in the criticism of childish make-believe was the intimation of moral uncertainty. The specific warnings about the dangers posed to bodily purity which suffused several eighteenth-century discussions of play and pretending sharpened and clarified that which could not be explicitly articulated in these texts. In other words, it was suggested that women should not imitate the child, because the child was morally dubious, and conceivably sexual. By contrast to the sinless and sanctifying role identified with the child in eighteenth-century primary medical texts, the literature of conduct subverts this ideal. It does so through the insidious mood of moral uncertainty which pervades its depictions of children. What converge here are notions of 'sinlessness', and barely-articulated intimations of the child's sexuality. In advice given to women about how, if not like children, they ought to behave, a sanctified portrayal of maternity is betrayed by intermittent suggestions about the contagious nature of her mature body. Attributing this exclusively to a notion of Original Sin fails to account for the anomalous nature of these representations. Underneath these contradictions was an anxiety surrounding the body itself.

iv. Wet-Nursing Versus Maternal Feeding.

Whilst women were explicitly warned not to be like children in their behaviour, they were repeatedly urged to have a close physical relationship with them, especially when the latter were at their most vulnerable, that is, under the age of seven years. Motherhood and the nurture and management of children were portrayed as the most appropriate roles for a wife. Certain commentators, of course, such as the bold 'Sophia', argued that there was no reason why women should not be allowed access to the wider commercial world.[57] The chief body of conduct literature, however, sustained the view that bearing and nurturing of children is what the female body was designed to perform. Whilst, for the modern reader, this creates an impression of mirroring the

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pp.106-108; John Cleland, *Fanny Hill*, 1749; P. Wagner, Ed. (Harmondsworth, 1985), p.162; Fanny Burney, *Evelina*, 1778; E.A. Bloom and L.D. Bloom, Eds. (Oxford, 1988), pp.79, 148, 222, for evidence of mistrust of sexual licence supposedly offered by the practice of adopting a fictional identity.

[57] Sophia, op.cit., p 36.

advice given by medical men about the natural role of the mother's body in nurturing her child, such ideas are clearly not simply transcribed from medical writing to conduct advice. Dichotomous and contradictory meanings associated with naturalness manifested themselves within conduct works in which 'anatomical truths' offered evidence in support of claims for appropriate domestic and commercial roles.[58]

Motherhood was isolated as the essential representation of womanly virtue: it was established as the most 'natural' and worthy role for the married woman, yet countervailing uncertainties within individual texts serve to expose the constructed and idealised nature of this depiction. These contradictions provide a core concern in this exploration of the subversive similarities in depictions of the child and the woman. The special provinces, which eighteenth-century conduct literature helped to define for them, overlapped each other. Popular voices, including those of Savile, Defoe, Cadogan, and Steele, urged their female readership to feed, nurture, and to provide constant companionship for their children.[59] The reason for this lies in the claims made concerning the nature of the feminine state of being. Astell's statement about every woman's inborn propensity towards virtue comprehensively embraced every woman:

> In a Word, every State of Life, whether of Marriage, or Widowhood or Virginity, is of itself alike virtuous and innocent.[60]

In much of the conduct literature which was published subsequently, however, specific depictions of the mother are singled out as the source of a "Principle from Nature", of all "Gentleness", benevolence, kindness and tenderness in humankind.[61] That she was presented as the sole embodiment of human virtue in its purest form is shown by Bland's deifying tribute to her:

> But a virtuous Woman has Things more transcendently glorious in her,

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[58] *L.L.*, I, 230, provides an outline of how the human body offers "Proofs, Demonstrations and Convictions for all that we are to believe of God and ourselves."
[59] *L.G.*, p.64; Defoe, *Instructor*, pp.95, 144, 175, 194; *L.L.*, II, 212-214.
[60] Astell, op.cit., p.143.
[61] Defoe, *Instructor*, p 194; *L.G.*, p.23; Fielding, op.cit., p.102.

> even the most Noble and Divine Ideas; and she will teach her Children more advantageous, and more celestial lessons.[62]

Bland discreetly drew on the discredited Catholic icon of the immaculate Virgin mother in this representation of maternity. Echoing the language of the Acts of the Apostles, he told children that they "must call her the most blessed of all Women here below", because she nurtures and guides them into ways of virtue.[63] The tacit suggestion, here, is that portraying the mother as a paragon of all that is good obscures the issue of her sexuality. A woman's value lies in her performance of maternal duties within a domestic arena. This can be seen as a commercial role of a sort which is geographically removed from the world of commerce outside it.[64] Motherhood was a form of productivity, and provided both future workers and future markets. Steele put this into his own words when he claimed that motherhood purified and enriched "not only ourselves, but our Wealth too" (II, 142). Children were to be preserved from the moral threat of having their heads filled "with fine Speculations" and were, instead, to be imbued with qualities of benevolence and "Tenderness" from their mother's milk and nurture.[65] This heightened state of sensibility was put forward as the "Condition they [women] are in by *Nature*."[66] Significantly, the basis for Steele's argument about mothers as the only source of benevolent feeling and virtue is the design of the woman's body itself. Anatomy provides the natural model for his recommendations of maternal behaviour: "Nothing in Nature", he insisted, "discovers more Wonders to the Curious than Anatomical Enquiries."(I, 216) James Nelson also adds his voice to the chorus: in a purposefully comprehensive guide to a mother's duties towards her children.[67] He told his patron to "Take upon you the office of a tender Mother, by cherishing, watching

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[62] Bland, op.cit., p.90.
[63] Ibid. p.57.
[64] S. Fielding, op.cit., p.67. It is emphasised that Mrs Teachum, in her role as 'mother' of her nine pupils, does not run her small school for profit: she consistently refuses to increase its numbers. That her qualification as a good surrogate mother seems to rely upon this rejection of commercial values is evidenced by the stress which is placed upon her limiting the pupil numbers, both at the start, and at the end of the story. See also Bland, op.cit., p.25. He praises the "industry" of a woman with numerous children on her lap, at her feet, and in her belly.
[65] *L.L.*, III, 266; *L.G.*, p.64.
[66] *L.L.*, II, 134.
[67] *E.G.*, Dedication.

over, and instructing your Offspring" (dedication). The good qualities of the ideal mother were thus to be socialised in a way which excluded the practice of nursing children abroad.

During the second decade of the eighteenth century, Steele regarded the practice of wet-nursing merely as unnatural (I, 106; II, 212-214). During the second half of the century, however, the practice of breastfeeding amongst women of all stations began to conform to medical and conduct propaganda. Chapone's advice associated far stronger criticism with the practice of mothers failing to undertake the complete care of their children.[68] Chapone warned that a mother who did not help her children was the antithesis of a true, virtuous mother. She was, instead, an embodiment of "real evil."[69] Because paid nurses were regarded as "Mercenary" and lacking, therefore, in the essential virtue of a natural mother, dark warnings about rendering an infant to them, and the "evil habits" which could be transfused with their "Strange" milk, are repeatedly offered to the reader of the literature of conduct.[70] Even Richardson's concessionary Letter - one of a collection which remained unfinished as he undertook the task of writing *Pamela* (1740-1741) - recommended an excellent wet-nurse by stressing the importance of her symbolically-significant "wholesome" cleanliness.[71]

In summary, representations of how mothers ought to be in the conduct literature of the first half of the eighteenth century were not only prolific, but centred around a portrayal of the breastfeeding mother protecting her child from the uncertainties of the outside commercial world. The biological mother also served to protect the child from literal and figurative 'disease' - what Stone terms "lower class, and probably evil traits", which were considered to be contained, harboured, and represented by the nurse's body.[72] A mother's breast, the symbol and source of human goodness, was deemed

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[68] Chapone, op.cit. See also Wollstonecraft, *Vindication*, p.254, for an idealised, pastoral image of domestic organisation: the mother, situated in isolation from her husband and other adults, breastfeeds her child. "I have turned to some other scene to relieve my eye by resting it on the refreshing green everywhere scattered by Nature. I have then viewed with pleasure a woman nursing her children."

[69] Chapone, op.cit., p.154.

[70] *L.L.*, II, 197, 222; Astell, op.cit., p.144.

[71] Richardson, *Letters Written To and For Particular Friends*, (London, 1741), p.43.

[72] Harriet Ritvo, 'Learning from Animals in Children's Literature', in *Children's Literature*, XIII (1985), pp.72-93. Ritvo assumes that 'middle class' children were urged to read in order to help them succeed in an alarming "aggressive commercial society." Although this fails to admit further, complementary

naturally and properly able to supply a child with a sense of benevolence towards others, and to impress its mind with virtue. Within these pictures of a maternal ideal, however, are many contradictions which serve to expose ways in which maternity, and the benevolent human nature which it shields, are sanitised through such depictions. The mother as a paragon and source of human virtue appears to be a construct of the writer, an idealisation which masked a society's anxiety about newly-discovered biological information concerning the female body, and its capacity to produce children.

v. Mothers' Bodies and the Lower Order of Primates.

Contradictions were introduced through intermittent equations between the woman and lower orders of animals, in particular, the monkey. Such associations were set against a backdrop of the prevailing debate in a field of biological enquiry, concerning the origins of humankind, and corresponding definitions of systems. The established, Puritan-rooted order, with man incontrovertibly established by God, in a privileged, separate position from all other forms of life, was one which was vigorously defended by Pennant, Hume, and Johnson.[73] Pennant responded with disbelief to Linnaeus's mid-century classification of primates: he could not entertain the idea that man shared the category of Primate with apes and monkeys.[74] Lord Monboddo's sensational assertion of the "incontestible" humanity of the "ouran-outang" [sic], in his work on the origins of language, provoked further outbursts.[75]

The strength of the derision aimed at these natural historians, a century before the infamous public ridicule of Charles Darwin, helps to illuminate and sustain the core concern of this Chapter. Disruptive biological findings necessitated emphasis upon, and the redefinition of, rules for socialising human conduct. There was a noticeable shift

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possibilities, it does evidence some sense of the corresponding redefinition of the domestic in response to a fearful, newly-emerging industrial world. L. Stone, op.cit., p.270.

[73] Thomas Pennant, *Synopsis of Quadrupeds*, 1771; 2nd ed., (London, 1781); see Wilfrid Blunt, *The Compleat Naturalist*, 1971; 2nd ed., (London, 1984), p.154; J.H. Burton, *Hume*, (Edinburgh, 1846), II, p.467, see James Boswell, *Boswell's Life of Johnson*, 1791; G.B. Hill, Ed. (London, 1934), II, 259-260.

[74] Pennant, op.cit., I, Preface, iii-iv.

[75] James Burnett, *Of the Origins and Progress of Language*, (Edinburgh, 1773), p.289; Idem. *Curious Thoughts on the History of Man*, (London, 1786).

from the seventeenth-century theme of justifying God's will through conduct literature, to employing visible evidence of 'anatomical design' as proof of a system of domestic order. Mythologising the maternal body, and locating it as the sole source of human virtue, contradicted complementary advice about the management, and concealment, of the appetites of that same body. The production of a secular, domestically-orientated corpus of conduct literature, together with its depiction of a maternal ideal, exposes a society's need for optimism and assurance.

Maternity, and the symbol of the breast, were identified as the core of human goodness. At the same time, conduct literature exposed anxieties surrounding new biological findings, such as the physiological links between the breasts and reproductive organs, the nurturing capacity of lower animals, and similarities between apes and humans.[76] The very material proof which sought to assure a society of the 'natural' correctness of its domestic and commercial structure, simultaneously disrupted these 'certainties'. The breast, symbol of all that was considered pure, was also suffused with sexual meaning and was, simultaneously, a source of 'sexual pollution'.

The equally prudish first Marquis of Halifax and Thomas Brown both regarded the act of breastfeeding as an exhibition of a mother's worth. Despite this, both located the mother's breast as the source of desire. Brown summarises a passage in which he persuades his audience of the principle of all "Passions" and "vices" in women, that of self-love. The blame is squarely placed upon maternal breastfeeding:

> In a Word, they suck'd it in with their Milk, and all their Infancy was nourished up in a Thousand Opportunities of creating Self-Love.[77]

In close correlation with this is George Savile's use of a metaphor for feeding which exists in sharp relief from his portrayals of the breastfeeding maternal paragon. Again, the mother's milk was blamed for imbuing the child with impure traits of self-love: "We

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[76] See, for scientific evidence of physiological links between breasts and uterus of women, the explanation of the function and physiology of the female breasts in one of the earliest English scientific encyclopeadia, Ephraim Chambers' *Cyclopaedia; Or, An Universal Dictionary of the Arts and Sciences*, 1727-1730; 2nd ed., (London, 1738-1754).

[77] Thomas Brown, *A Legacy for the Ladies*, (London, 1705), p.87.

suck in so greedily these early *Mistakes* " Savile claimed, "that our riper Understanding hath much ado to cleanse our Minds from this kind of *Trash*" (6). The language of morality used to denounce the child's excessive appetite suggestively shapes the nature of the impurity. It is the mother's body which is unclean: contagion is transfused through her milk. Thomas Brown's succinct summary of the nature of the female will, shows how her bodily wants are collectively identified with endemic, unmanageable sexual "Desires".[78] Savile's words evidence just such associations which preoccupied many early eighteenth-century writers, those which exist between bodily appetite and sexual desire itself.[79]

More explicit definition of what Brown summarised as an association between self-love, "Passions" and "Vices" is lent by Steele's disgust for a feature which remains unspeakable. Steele's condemnation of the characters of nurses ignores the necessity of the nurse being a mother herself. Her role in a commercial sense may indicate her predisposition towards immoral "natural Inclinations and irregular Passions" (II, 222). What preoccupied Steele, however, was the contagion which her body had 'caught', presumably as the result of the sexual activity proven by her motherhood. Her milk was infected, and so sexual disorder was passed on to the child via contact with her body.

> *Strange Milk* which is often very disagreeable to the *Child*, and with which the *Child* to be sure Sucks in the natural Infirmities of the Nurse, together with a great deal of her natural Inclinations and irregular Passions, which many Times stick by the *Child* a long Time after; and, which is worse than all this, it sometimes happens that some secret Disease of the *Nurse* is convey'd to the *Child* (II, 222).

Still more sinister is the intimation of further, deeply pervasive disease to which the child is exposed. Bland, however, was less specific in his location of the nurse's breast as the site for a child's infusion with ill principles; he revealed, instead, that only "some" mothers are to blame.[80]

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[78] Brown, op.cit., p.7.
[79] Flynn, op.cit., pp.46-50.
[80] Bland, op.cit., p.192.

These suggestions embellish meanings which several modern commentators claim are at the source of changes in social practice regarding wet nursing. Stone and Pollock, for instance, equate this change with the widespread fear of the conditions of poverty and rumours of the careless, and undesirable behaviour of the commercial nurse.[81] Eighteenth-century conduct literature then, as we have seen, itself points to a finer definition of the sexually disordered nature of this conduct. Pollock also concedes that the practice of wet-nursing continued because of the fear of maternal sexual activity curdling the milk.[82] What is hinted at but not quite addressed by both of these assertions, is that the sexually-active body 'pollutes' the child as it nurtures it; the literature of conduct, it seems, serves as both an expression of, and a response to, anxieties which underlie depictions of the foetus in the womb in a newly-emerging field of medical discourse. By implication, milk from a mother's body could be suffused, not with the highest principles of virtue, but with 'contagious' sexual desires.

Richard Steele shared none of the modern writer's distaste for unacknowledged acts of plagiarism. Although he made a small tribute to the influence of the late seventeenth-century philosopher, "Mr Lock [sic]" he reproduced almost exact copies of Locke's words on the nature of human virtue in the second volume of *The Ladies' Library*, as if they were his own.[83] We are reminded that the great principle and foundation of all virtue and worth is placed in humankind's capacity to control its own appetite, and to apply a rein upon its desires (II, 302). This has a significant bearing upon inconsistencies in the presentation of the conduct maternal role. At times, comparisons are made between mothers and an assortment of animals which were believed to be base, irrational, and thus, by definition, incapable of manifesting anything which remotely resembled human virtue.

The lowliest, and most terrible mythological creature - a monster - is equated with a woman who exhibits a love of the self which, for Brown, meant concern for her

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[81] L. Stone, op.cit., p.248; Pollock, op.cit., p.50.

[82] Pollock, op.cit., p.50.

[83] *L.L.*, II, 211, 159, 194-198; John Locke, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, 1693; J .Axtell, Ed. (London, 1968), pp.142-143. Locke himself would have approved of his educational theories being incorporated into direct conduct literature in the early years of the eighteenth century: his own library contained upwards of 40 conduct books.

physical attractiveness. Savile is far more specific about exactly which animal a woman may be likened to. Again, the practice of trying to appear more attractive than she is, presumably by resorting to self-adornment, "turneth her into a worse Creature than a *Monkey*" (119).

The mother's role provided no sanctuary from such censure. Despite depictions of the breastfeeding mother which celebrated this as proof of the highest and most virtuous of human acts, Steele drew analogies between the mother's feeding and the lowest and most cruel of mythological and non-fictional beasts. "Sea Monsters draw at the breast", we are told, and by way of reinforcement he added, "they give suck to their young ones."[84] Another reference to the 'sanctifying' nurture of a child generalises about the animal-like quality of 'irrational' mothers. Clearly, manifesting the feeling tenderness which qualified them for maternity also reduced mothers to the base level of primates:

> I cannot but conclude, there are other Creatures [women] as well as Monkies, who, little wiser than they, destroy their young Ones by senseless Fondness, and too much embracing (II, 282).

Within a newly-emerging literature which explored natural history, depictions of animals with their offspring sustained the challenge to the ideal human mother which many eighteenth-century conduct books for women attempted to conceal. In his address to the reader, Thomas Boreman made one direct claim: children, he said, would learn, by inference, of the higher rank, and corresponding behaviour, expected of humankind, as they read about lower animals.[85] On the strength of this direct classification of his own work as one which would teach children how to regard, and thus, to conduct themselves, I have included two of his works here. Boreman's lively illustrated editions contain wide-ranging and highly detailed accounts of the ways in which other animals

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[84] *L.L.*, II, 188; Bland, op.cit., p.192. Here, maternal feeding is located as the source of children's ill principles.

[85] Thomas Boreman, *A Description of Three Hundred Animals*, 1730; new ed., (London,1791), address. Also, Idem. *Gigantick Histories*, (London, 1740-1743), Boreman's pioneering ten volume 'miniature' collection especially for children.

appear, and how different kinds, thus distinguished, behave.[86] Included in many of the descriptions is information about the behaviour of the female towards her young. Here, qualities which have been exclusively identified with the maternal source of high human virtue in the literature which delineates appropriate human female behaviour, match those manifested by lowly rodents!

Quadrupeds were supposed, by this pre-Linnaean natural historian, to be the animals closest to man because of their use to, and affinity with, him.[87] His accounts abound with examples of the excellent nurturing qualities of these and other lower animals. The female ox, for instance, "gently tends her young", whilst asses milk was "esteemed by Physicians" for its high quality.[88] Careful and tender maternal behaviour is also attributed to still lower orders of animals, including the elephant, the fox-ape, the woodlark, and protective wren.[89] Pictured in *A Great Variety of Animals and Vegetables* (1736) is a Wood dormouse, whose body is barely distinct from the young she feeds and carries on her back: her tail is curled protectively around each.[90]

The suggestion, here, between the capacity for 'maternal' nurture possessed by lower animals, and that of women, is coloured by the sexualising of the seat of human virtue, the breast, in one depiction of a fantastic animal called the Lamia. This creature of ancient mythological invention is, rather surprisingly, integrated within an exhaustive list of non-fictional animals. As if mimetic of this interspersion of scientific fact with fiction, minor details concerning the physical location of this imaginary animal are also included in Boreman's description. The Lamia, we are told in all earnestness at the end of the profile, lives in Libya. The combined symbolic significance of the female Lamia's possession of "Face and Breasts like a very beautiful woman" fuels the reader's expectation of her manifestation of the highest benevolent maternal behaviour.[91] Unlike even the lowest of the other animals, however, she "devours" her own young,

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[86] Boreman, *Three Hundred* ; Idem. *A Description of a Great Variety of Animals and Vegetables*, (London, 1736).
[87] Linnaeus devised and introduced a system of binominal nomenclature for all living species in 1753, see Blunt, op.cit., p.247.
[88] Boreman, *Three Hundred*, p.14.
[89] Ibid. pp.51, 28, 120, 123.
[90] Boreman, *Variety*, op.cit., p.6.
[91] Ibid. p.22.

and seductively "entices" men to "draw near" by laying "open its Breast."[92] Precisely such an act is regarded by Steele as one of implicit sexual invitation.

In spite of Steele's location of the breast as the source of the highest human principles, he also offered advice upon suitable clothing for a woman: dressing in a way which reveals "Naked Breasts and naked Bosoms" shows her to be possessed of youthful "strong Passion" of a kind which James Nelson simply refused to acknowledge in his consideration of women (I, 68; II, 186). Nelson claimed only that "we are not once to suppose they [passions] exist in the Sex" (58). Instead, Steele advocated the example of Greek and Roman statues in advising women how to dress. The clothing should be "full, and carelessly hanging" (I, 79). The intention of this practice is clear: it rendered the shape of the body indistinct.

vi. Homogenising Mothers and Children.

Many presentations of mothers and of children implicitly homogenise mothers and infants in such a way that their separate provinces are rendered indistinct. Also worthy of note here is that the clothing recommended for women is the same as that advocated for very young children. Similar loose clothing for infants was being advised as early as the last decade of the seventeenth century.[93] Also, as Stone points out, popular works such as William Cadogan's *An Essay upon Nursing and the Management of Children* (1748) did much to replace the practice of swaddling with looser clothing.[94] Further implicit evidence concerned with feminine clothing contradicted the notion of the pure maternal body in Steele's text. The author suddenly claimed to have just mentioned girls, yet discussion on the seven prec eding pages had centred exclusively upon boys.[95] Subsequent advice about keeping clothing loose about the male breast echoed his earlier

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[92] Ibid. p.22.
[93] See Nelson, op.cit., pp 89, 103.
[94] L. Stone, op.cit., pp.267-269.
[95] *L.L.*, pp.274-281. On p.274, Steele states that he will specifically deal with male children in the subsequent pages: "I have said *he* in this Place, because my Principal [sic] Aim in the following Part of my Discourse, will be how a *young Gentleman* should be brought up from his *Infancy*."

discussion of the practice of strait-lacing girls so that, like the feet of Chinese girls, their bodies did not grow naturally:

> One thing the mention of the Girls brings into my Mind, which must not be forgot, and that is that your Son's *Cloaths* be never made strait, especially about the *Breast* ; Let Nature have scope to fashion the Body as she thinks fit; she works of her self a great deal better and exacter than we can direct her (II, 281).

The isolated mention of girls within a context of discussion about boys acts as a pointer to the metaphorical use of the boy's body. It is used in order to voice Steele's concern about the detriment to health which accompanies the practice of constricting a maturing female body. This substitution admits an expectation of moral danger and degeneracy which pervades certain depictions of the feeding mother across a number of 'conduct' texts. The sexual maturation of the girl's body into that of woman could not be overtly acknowledged, yet unlike comparable substitutions of the maternal body in the narrative fiction of the same period, this served rather to expose a constructed idealisation of maternity, than to become an integral part of a process of re-mystification.

The relationship between the province of the child, and that of the woman, was not a straightforward one. Explicit in the texts which taught women how their identity and the behaviour expected of them differed from that of a child, certain conflicting portrayals of the 'natural' state of each reveals an underlying fear of their similar materiality. Located with each is the notion of appetite, and the gratification of self and sensual desire. Concentrated within this underlying 'homogenisation', it seems, was the fear that the mother's body was sexually contagious, and that she passed on this impurity through physical contact with her child. The act of feeding her child ironically symbolised her purity and goodness, and lucid depictions of maternity advocated an intimate relationship between mother and child in the conduct literature. The fear of the woman's body precipitated the need for its management within this domestic arena: it was expressed, however, by the construct of an idealised image which sought to obscure this fear. Subtle suggestions, raised through intermittent textual inconsistencies,

together with a self-conscious insistence upon demarcating different provinces for women and children within the domestic arena, point to a conviction that the bodies of women and children announced certain similarities about their 'natural' states. In an increasingly secular society, traditional, doctrinally-rooted, and 'sexualised' notions of innocence and guilt were correspondingly challenged through implicit equations made between women and children.

Advice literature also outlined similar codes of conduct which were considered exclusive to women and children. These reinforced ambiguities surrounding the status of the woman and that of the child: they also served to merge their identities. An implicit sense of the 'homogenisation' of their physical wants is sustained by exclusive patterns of advice which are noticably alike, despite being frequently aimed at women and children as individual groups. There are marked differences between the advice given to men concerning their need to exhibit their modesty in public, and that which is addressed to women and to children. Once again, such similarities contribute to a sense of the diverse pattern of ways in which the provinces of woman and child are united. A prescription of modest behaviour common to both serves, in a sense, as a code for the exhibition of emotional 'sensibility': women and children are urged to manifest 'feeling' and empathetic behaviour, which is obviously the antithesis of animal-like exhibitions of cruelty seen in many examples of the literature addressed to children. Also entailed in this prescription of modesty is a control over the body which, unlike patterns of male modesty, seeks to deny the responsiveness of that body, its potential power of attracting the attention of others' eyes and, in some cases, its shapeliness.

The differences between women and children, and what they must demonstrate, highlights their need to hide, and thus to contain, their 'natural' responses. Metaphorically masked by copious pages concerned with the exercise of modesty and empathy in all situations, was the 'natural', energetic, self-willed inclination, with all the moral ambiguities which accompanied this. The directive of these similar codes of modesty brought to the fore a set of conflicting meanings which centred upon the control, and concealment, of their responsive bodies. The mutual subjection of mother and child to particular sections of advice render the domestic issue far more complex

and subversive than that which is overtly articulated by these texts. The source of a disjunction between the overt and implicit treatment of physicality and maternity is far more than just what Flynn calls an "uneasiness" about the nature of the body itself.[96] Underlying this advice, and providing the need for a separate discourse which sought to teach how to 'translate' a moral code into material proof, is a profound anxiety surrounding contemporaneous anatomical proof of human origin. The female body which was shown to have such intimate links with its offspring admitted the shocking possibility that the child's body was sexualised through contact with its mother.

Broadly speaking, at the beginning of the eighteenth century, the codes for masculine and feminine modest behaviour appear to diverge. Advice which was aimed at gentlemen during the last quarter of the seventeenth century prescribed a code of behaviour, and elements of this bear a striking resemblance to that offered to women during the following century. It is difficult to explain this trend, especially as the male and female body were beginning to be perceived as very different at precisely this time. Thomas Laqueur succinctly summarises this at the beginning of his study of how he perceives anatomical knowledge contributed to fixed senses of gender identity during the period.[97]

The prescription of male modesty during the late seventeenth century embraced certain ideas concerned with the presentation of the self in company.[98] There was also, however, emphasis placed upon the identification of modesty with the body, and its responsiveness which, in the following century, evolved as an exclusively feminine topic. The recommendations made by two writers admit the central premise which underlay this advice. *The Friendly Monitor* (1692) suggested that gentlemen in company ought to employ modesty in order to avoid attracting potentially sexual attention.[99] The "*Lust of the Eyes*" must be avoided, as must potentially lewd use of the voice.[100] Silence is advised, "in order to preserve the Soul Pure and undefil'd."[101] The

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[96] Flynn, op.cit., p.56.
[97] Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex*, (Cambridge, Mass., 1990), p.6.
[98] See Antoine de Courtin, *The Rules of Civility*, (London, 1678), p.306; Idem. *The Art of Complaisance*, 1676; 2nd ed., (London, 1677), p.81; J.R., (Ed.), *The Advice of a Father*, (London, 1688), p.18.
[99] J.R., *The Friendly Monitor*, (London, 1692).
[100] Ibid. p.69.
[101] Ibid. p.77.

suggestion was that modest conduct be used strategically in order to obscure and control the sexually demonstrative body. *The Art of Complaisance* (1677) a translation of French courtesy advice, proposed male exhibition of benevolent "sweetness, kindness and modesty" which provided the basis for the conversion of such problematic sexuality to a source of feeling.[102]

As might easily be predicted, women and men were still being encouraged to adopt modest behaviour at the beginning of the eighteenth century. Childs attributes some of the differences between the conduct literature of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to changes in commercial activity: this seems to be verified by the preoccupation, in the male directives, upon the art of social interaction (7). There was a shift from the connotation of male modesty with the management of sexuality, to a more intellectual concern. The Earl of Chesterfield carefully explained this in one of his letters to his young son.[103] Modesty, in the adult, masculine world, was necessary because of the interactive nature of social gathering. Men were advised to "conceal their own merit" either by maintaining silence, or by talking in moderation.[104] Male modesty was an integral part of the art of oration and refraining from forwardness was understood in terms of avoiding speaking about themselves too much.[105] Male modesty was a means by which a man was able to attract socially acceptable "acquaintance."[106] The concept of male vanity, which modest behaviour sought to obscure, was also removed from the sexual agenda: it was largely associated with an intellectual notion of social domination, rather than with an overkeen interest in the self and materiality.

The basis for a precept of modest behaviour was widely advocated for the female readers of conduct literature, too, but this was chiefly concerned with the control and concealment of their responsive bodies. By contrast to the intellectual and social context out of which a need for male modesty arises, that which was prescribed for women was rooted in the issue of their sexual bodies. The strength and frequency of recommendations to women which urged them to exhibit modest behaviour can be

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[102] Courtin, *Complaisance*, p. 32.
[103] Chesterfield, *Letters*, p. XLIV.
[104] Ibid. XLIV, (29 Oct. 1749). Idem. *Politeness*, p.92.
[105] Joseph Addison, 'Essay on Modesty', in *The Spectator*, (No. 231), (1713), p.349.
[106] Ibid. p.2.

linked to the similarities between advice given to children which also insisted upon a similar precept of modest behaviour: stalking the multidimensional means of implicitly homogenising women and children was a society's preoccupation with the female body, maternity, and the 'natural' origins of the child.

Certain kinds of response were obscured by manifestations of a modest quality which operated as a code for 'sensibility'.[107] The woman's body was rendered amorphous by 'coverings', literal and metaphorical, which were recommended for it. It was silenced, and rendered anonymous, and was denied energetic responses which included suggestions of positive attachment. Inherent in the presence and dynamic manifestations of the female body, was its problematic sexuality: this was 'replaced' through the physical representation of a body which was seen as the source of feeling.[108] A 'feeling' body was displayed, admired, idealised, and also questioned by some prescribers of modesty, and, like the idealised representation of maternity, it was evidence of her sinlessness. Her body could be overtly identified with absolute virtue and the assurance of bodily purity which went with this.

The quality of modesty was proposed for women "with more than ordinary *earnestness*" by the Marquis of Halifax. His voice joined a host of others who claimed that, of all the human states, it was women who were "most *inclined* " to want to attract attention (112). Even the words of Colley Cibber's tolerant and questioning Sir Charles agreed with this view: women wanted to attract the eyes of onlookers because, he claimed wryly, they were "a little too fond of praise" and were all particularly interested in their physical appearances.[109] According to Brown, a woman who did not possess modesty with which to temper this innate desire was reduced to the most base of animal statuses:

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[107] See *E.C.L.*, p.284. Childs argues that the idea of sensibility was produced and popularised by novels such as Richardson's *Pamela*, and that as an ideal code, it reached its fullest development in the nineteenth century. My account is at odds with this because it does not adequately explain the source of the 'feeling' ideal. A central theme of my thesis is that depictions of maternity as a source of feeling do not wholly fit into such accounts of a linear historical progression.

[108] Addison, op.cit., p.350. Here, Addison renders female modesty synonymous with "delicate feeling."

[109] Colley Cibber, *The Lady's Lecture*, (London, 1748), 'Dedication to the lovely Miss --.'

> ... she is soon made sensible of the Dangers, wherein her Negligence has led her; and her best Course is, to hasten her Return into the forsaken Path, that her natural Constitution inclin'd her to leave .... When once a Woman is so far infatuated with Self-Love, as to shake Hands with her Modesty, she becomes the most dangerous and ungovernable Monster that is.[110]

This echo of the beast metaphor, with associations of a thoroughly pervasive desire for sensual gratification which it entails, underscores a need for a code of behaviour which would ensure its management. Modesty, according to Brown, could achieve precisely that, removing manifestations of female self-indulgence which were symbolised by her physicality.

Modest behaviour removes any intimation of morally ambiguous sexual attraction. Astell's words that modesty required "that a Woman should not love before Marriage" because, in an unmarried state, she was only in possession of "innocent affections" were reiterated well into the following century.[111] Richardson, in conservative mood, warned of the dangers involved in the exposure of such positive attachments, in *The Rambler* (1751). "Prudence, and even Policy", he insisted, "must not allow" a young lady to feel, let alone announce her "Love", whilst the male focus of her attention remained yet "undeclared" in his own attachment to her.[112] She must maintain a modest silence. By hiding her attraction, her moral worth remained unchallenged. In Semanthe's story, too, severest principles of modesty assure Isabella that her friend resisted the temptation offered by a lover.[113] This means of managing, and 'covering-over' a woman's sexual responsiveness with modest behaviour amuses Cibber's Sir Charles, as he attempts to coax his daughter into telling him about any secret attachment which she may entertain towards a possible husband. Her father's words, that "Modesty is so apt to be a Check upon Nature", are confirmed by the

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[110] Brown, op.cit., pp.9, 13.
[111] Astell, op.cit., p.165.
[112] Samuel Richardson, 'Advice to Unmarried Ladies', in *The Rambler*, I (No. 97), 1751; rep. D.D. Eddy, Ed. (New York, 1978), p.576.
[113] Elizabeth Rowe, *Friendship in Death*, 1728; new ed., (Plymouth, 1814), p.249.

evasive daughter.[114] Any such feelings she may harbour, should be contained by her need to demonstrate her virtue. "Modesty", she agrees, "is not over-apt to blab."[115]

The censure of garrulous women is, of course, not exclusive to this period or form. More than three hundred years earlier, for instance, Chaucer's misogynistic Janekin cites his wife's talkativeness as one of her most ungodly faults, whilst the *O.E.D.* locates the origin of a label for 'gossips' in the all-female midwifery arrangements of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.[116] A need for female silence was, however, thematically reiterated throughout eighteenth-century conduct literature alongside suggestions which were concerned with the issue of bodily purity. Talking "*Impertinently*" in company was suffused with moral meaning, and it was a practice decried throughout the century.[117] Savile ridiculed women who failed to keep silence in company. As one talkative woman flirtatiously seeks the attention of her listeners, her active, and morally dubious search for a particular kind of attention is intimated: it is emphasized that "Her *Eyes* keep pace with her *Tongue*."[118] The absence of any explanation accompanying Steele's observation that, in company, a young woman should "never speak", suggests that the meaning associated with her voice is implicit and familiar to his audience.[119] Astell's dark reference to the "sister vices" which accompany talkativeness, however, is informed by more explicit indications regarding the idea of self-indulgent flirtation across a number of texts.[120] Melinda, for example, in Elizabeth Rowe's morally instructive letters, has only to be associated with a noisy household for onlookers to assume that she must possess a morally degenerate status. A potential husband changes his mind about pursuing her on this account alone. Later in the same letter, Melinda's modest silence, together with an exhibition of her "tenderness", is "the only evidence" that she can offer which verifies the purity of her

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[114] Cibber, op.cit., p.2.
[115] Ibid. p.3.
[116] Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Wife of Bath's Prologue*, F.N. Robinson, Ed. (London, 1933), p.82, ll.653-654. For association of the term 'gossips' with female birth attendants, see seventeenth-century definition in *O.E.D.*
[117] *L.G.*, pp.88-89.
[118] Ibid. p.121. See also Wollstonecraft, *Reader*, p.111, for a reiteration of this assumption that talkativeness accompanies vanity and self-indulgence.
[119] *L.L.*, I, 56.
[120] Astell, op.cit., p.167.

body and mind.[121] Illuminating the significance of this relationship between silence and bodily purity is Wollstonecraft's selection of a poem in *The Female Reader* (1789) which renders silence the singular emblem of a young woman's chastity.[122] Steele's indictment of those who fraudulently attempted to mimic modest behaviour stressed the central importance of the pretence of empathetic sensitivity to this (I, 197). Benevolent acts of charity which were inspired by feeling "tender hearted" women were intimately collocated with advice concerning modesty.[123] Ironically, displays of modesty sought to obscure the responsive female body, yet the notion of 'sensibility' accorded with this was revealed by the exhibition of physical proof. Individual authors of the literature of conduct ambiguously sustained and criticised the inaudible "language of a silent tear" and the "sighs" which were seen to demonstrate a woman's virtuous sensibility.[124]

The notion of an alliance between modest behaviour and managing a woman's "Wishes" or "insatiable Desires" merges with the metaphorical use of modesty as an idea which 'hides' the female physical form.[125] Modest clothing for women, as was mentioned earlier, consisted of a loose, often white article which deliberately obscured their shape.[126] In the narrative fiction of the mid-eighteenth century and later, this became a way in which heroines visually proved their sexual innocence.[127] Steele pointed out that clothing was designed to conceal the body, rather than to attract attention to it, yet in the same text, it also symbolisesd carnal knowledge (II, 306). It was proof of the Biblical notion of the fall, and of "having lost that Innocence" of an Edenic, pure state. The interchangeable nature of clothing as a symbol of modesty, and its dual function in offering evidence of the impure sexual body here,

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[121] Rowe, op.cit., p.256.
[122] Wollstonecraft, *Reader*, p.332, ll.2-3.
[123] Bland, op.cit., p.107.
[124] See Chapone, op.cit., p.49, for her denouncement of exaggerated, sentimental responses by women who have been told that "tenderness and softness" are the peculiar charms of a modest woman. Also, however, p.80, for Chapone's own recommendation that "Gentleness" and "meekness" should distinguish a woman's behaviour. Wollstonecraft, *Reader*, p.385.
[125] Brown, op.cit., p.7.
[126] Bland, op.cit., p.46, unites the symbolic white colour of this clothing, with the suggestion of "unblemish'd Chastity."
[127] See *Cl.*, p.723, for an example of her loose white clothing which is echoed in Haywood, op.cit., p.83, through the stress placed upon the looseness of Miss Forward's clothing before the seduction, and is deliberately worn by Fanny Burney's Mrs Burlinton in *Camilla*, 1796; E.A. Bloom and L.D. Bloom, Eds. (Oxford, 1989), p 388.

sustains my argument that modesty was used to obscure problematic, substructural meanings which were endemic in representations of female physicality.

A complex code of modest behaviour was prescribed by the literature of conduct. An intimate part of this was the manifestation of 'feeling' behaviour, which echoed idealistic portrayals of a mother's body. The female body was also looked to for evidence of the feeling self. At the same time, manifestations of modest behaviour sought to obscure certain meanings which were represented, articulated, and confirmed by a woman's materiality. Like the many portrayals of maternity in these texts, modesty and the expression of sensibility which corresponds with it, brought with them potentially subversive sexuality. Tensions evolved between anxiety which surrounded her physicality, and the role of the body in proving virtue, and a biologically-designated role, in a society in which proof of human 'truths' was sought in empiricist and anatomical evidence. Modesty, it seems, was employed as a means of rendering the woman sinless because it concealed a body which was seen as suffused with carnal appetites.

vii. Managing Children.

James Nelson stressed, in his *Essay on the Government of Children* (1753) that children's bodies, like those of adults, exhibit their 'true' natures (190). "We must know their Faces", he urged parents, "and mark their Deportment." Texts which addressed themselves to children, and those which taught parents about the nature and needs of the child, provided a code of modest behaviour which closely cohered with that advised for women. Also in contrast to the prescription of male modesty, children were repeatedly warned of the sensual nature of their bodies. Silence was recommended as a means of controlling and containing animal-like responses and energetic wantonness. Advice abounded concerning the need for them to convert the body's dynamic responses, for example, their anger and "Passion" to empathy and benevolence (247). The intimate thematic cohesion between the bodies of woman and child which such similarity of treatment sustains, merged their identities; a sense of their homogenisation was

produced by the same literature which announced and explained childhood as a distinct province from that of the adult.

A selection of the literature of conduct for and about children which produced this sense of uniformity, was necessarily more diverse in form than that which declared itself a text about how to behave in an adult sphere.[128] As Wooden has indicated, children's literature includes that abundant storehouse of lively, sometimes general inclusive texts which the children chose to read for themselves, as well as those works written with children - and often a religious purpose - in mind.[129] A considerable proportion of the literature which delineates appropriate behaviour for children implicitly couches its instructive message in stories, poems, and songs. Watts states in the preface to his enormously successful *Divine Songs* (1715) that this provides an entertaining and memorable, if less direct means, by which children will learn how to behave.[130] For this reason, my exploration of the literature of conduct for children is based upon a far looser concept of genre than the correspondingly more focussed corpus which was solely aimed at an adult readership. For the purposes of this study, children's literature is understood as certain general printed works which may have been available to children, as well as that which declares its design to improve a juvenile audience, or which demonstrates, through compensating language, subject matter, or size, that it is intended for a young audience with different needs and interests to those of adults.

'Tommy Trapwit's' equation between the child's voice, and its exposure of the beast-like self mirrors analogies which are drawn between women and their material natures in the literature of conduct for women. "The tongue is a wild Beast", he warns, that is "very difficult to be chained again, when once let loose."[131] James Janeway and, later, Watts also imply that the need to "tame and rule" the "tongue" arises with a notion

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[128] This selection of the literature which was specifically produced for a juvenile audience conflicts with the view of Pinchbeck and Hewitt, op.cit., p 299. They state that literature for children was not available until 1744. L. Stone, op.cit, p.256, claims that the advent of children's literature was during the 1750's. Pollock, op.cit., p.262, and Harriet Spiegel, *Instructing the Children*, (New Haven, Conn., 1989), p 43, claim that children's literature has existed since medieval times, whilst William Sloane, *Children's Books in the Seventeenth Century*, (New York, 1955), establishes the advent of children's literature during the seventeenth century by highlighting Watts' many predecessors.

[129] Wooden, op.cit., pp.xiv, 74, 121. It is also known that some adults, Henry Fielding, for example, read and enjoyed chap-books.

[130] Isaac Watts, *Divine Songs*, 1715; Facs. ed., (London, 1971).

[131] Alexandria, (pseud.), *Tommy Trapwit's Pleasant Tales*, (Gainsborough, 1733), p.93.

of voices providing the initial unchecked expression of bodily energies.[132] Watts insists that these will be quickly followed by manifestations of cruelty, and a host of other equally terrible misdemeanours:

> Hard names at first and threatening Words,
> That are but noisy Breath,
> May grow to Clubs and naked swords,
> To Murder and to Death.[133]

Later, the same Song quietly associates these 'sinful' possibilities with a spicy hint of the sexual issue; we have already seen, of course, that this is also endemic in advice about silence and women. Children are punished for indulging in "wanton Play."[134] A suggestion of bodily defilement is implicit in this, partly because of the nature of the punishment, and also because, in Song twenty-one, Watts used this notion of wantonness interchangably with that of impurity. Wanton words 'defile' the speaker and listener together. Johnson's definitions of this term also offered several senses of meaning, each of which was , to some degree, associated with 'sexual sin'. The first of these identified wantonness with Miltonic "lascivious" and "lustful" sexual appetite. Even Johnson's interpretation of wantonness as careless physical movement, however, shared such sexual undertones to some extent, because he also described this energy as lascivious.

In keeping with the equation of moral uncertainties which were associated with women, children were warned about vanity and becoming preoccupied with their bodies. *The Advice of a Father* (1688) recommends "Physick" and "fasting" to help to "tame the flesh".[135] The child was advised to ignore and obscure its body in precisely the same way as women were told to do, by "casting a vail [sic] over thy naked part."[136]

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[132] James Janeway, *A Token for Children*, 1672-1673; 2nd ed., (London, 1676), p.5. Watts, op.cit., song 18, stanza 6, ll.3-4.
[133] Watts, op.cit., song 17, stanza 3, ll1-4.
[134] Ibid. song 17.
[135] J.R., *Advice*, op.cit., p. 29.
[136] *L.L.*, I, 234. Laying "a Veil on your Nakedness" acknowledges the shame which is associated with the Biblical fall from Eden, gaining carnal knowledge, and requiring repentance. J.R., *Advice*, op.cit., p.29.

In Watts' Song twenty-two, exactly the same advice about rejecting physical gratification given by Astell is echoed in Stanza five. Children were told to look, instead, towards "Inward adorning of the Mind."[137] 'Tommy Trapwit ' is equally insistent about an urgent need for the child to turn its attention away from self-love and sensual pleasure, which is the "*Poison*" of mind and body.[138] In numerous chapbooks, too, the dangers of indulging the self and will in other ways, are spelled out. A moral conclusion at the end of *The History of Joseph and his Brethren* (1750) for example, focusses upon the "causeless" anger experienced by the brothers in the Biblical story, and on the cruelty which results from their indulgence of it.[139]

Literature which outlined ideal conduct for children, frequently warned of the child's unchecked manifestations of self. These echo moral uncertainties surrounding a concept of the female self and what her body was thought to reveal about her. Children were cautioned about controlling a body whose manifestations of speech and deed were thought to be dangerous. Thematic associations with similar advice which was given to women about their bodies, and the modest behaviour which they must adopt, cooperated together with hints concerning sexual energy and bodily impurity. These contributed to an equivocal idea of the child's body which was suffused with sexuality. Nelson advised that a child should 'convert' its material appetite to demonstrations of benevolent love:

> let them counteract the Passion by encouraging in them Meekness, Clemency and Love (247).

The exhibition of silent, modest behaviour by the Queen's wayward daughter in *The governess* (1749) provides Queen and readers with proof that the child has rejected sensual pleasures.[140] Similarities between sanitising women through their demonstration of feeling and virtue, and advice given to children about their need to

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[137] Astell, op.cit., pp.140, 142, 149, 156, 161-163, 169; Watts, op.cit., song 22, stanza 5, l.2.
[138] Alexandria, op.cit., pp.63-65.
[139] 'The History of Joseph and his Brethren', (circa 1750), in John Ashton, *Chap-Books of the Eighteenth Century*, 1882; Facs. ed. (Hertfordshire, 1969).
[140] S. Fielding, op.cit., p.273.

exhibit benevolence, once again reinforce the thematic equation between the 'nature' of each group. The implication was that children, like women, were required to learn how to be feeling as a means of obscuring their bodily desire. In contrast with his conduct book, which addresses an adult male readership, Chesterfield's advice to a son of less than eight years of age repeatedly urged him to treat the poor with "benevolence and mildness."[141] Virtue could be manifested by a child, he told him, through the child's willingness to "relieve the misfortunes of mankind."[142] A child's "unruly" body must be controlled through the conscious adoption and exhibition of "Love thro' all your Actions."[143]

Foxton, in his answer to Watts' request for the composition of moral songs, constantly restated the child's need to manifest benevolent behaviour in order to prompt its comparison with absolute virtue.[144] At times, such displays of virtue served to suggest that a child had been "sanctified from the very womb."[145] Marking the start of unprecedented success for John Newbery's publishing house, and major growth in the supply and demand for children's books, is Kitty Somers' brother, George.[146] Here again a story centres around George's animality, and his reform from a boy whose cruelty allows him to torture flies, dogs, cattle, and a cat, to one who has learned "compassion".[147] Each of Lawrence Lovesense's stories concentrate upon the theme of childhood brutality, as do many of John Ashton's collection of chap-books produced in the same year.[148] Concurrent with this, however, was growing emphasis upon the need for fictional characters in some children's literature to learn, and exhibit, signs of sensibility. In an increasingly secular society, the assurance of fictional women's

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[141] Chesterfield, *Letters*, XXXII. See, for detail of the son's age, letter XLII, Stress is placed upon the importance of benevolence and mildness in children in Thomas Foxton, *Moral Songs*, 1728; 3rd ed., (London, 1737), song VIII, ll1-2; *E.G.*, p.185.

[142] Chesterfield, *Letters*, , LXVII.

[143] J.R., *Advice*, , p.12. Watts, op.cit., song 16, stanza 3, 11.

[144] See Watts, forward, in, Foxton, op.cit., and song VII, stanzas 4, 7.

[145] Janeway, op.cit., p.14.

[146] John Newbery, *The Sister's Gift or, The Bad Boy Reform'd*, 1765; new ed., (York, 1826). Reeve, op.cit., I, 112, recommended Newbery's books in her list of children's literature.

[147] Ibid. pp.20-21. The story of brutal treatment which is meeted out to a cat is not a new one: the image, used by Newbery for the best sentimental effect, mirrors that employed by Fielding sixteen years earlier, in *The Governess*, , p.130.

[148] Lawrence Lovesense, (pseud.) *The Effects of Tyranny and Disobedience*, (London, circa 1750). Ashton, op.cit., see especially, 'The Story of Valentine and Orson', 'The History of Fortunas', 'The Famous History of Tom Thumb', and 'The Whole Life and Death of Long Meg of Westminster.'

physical purity underwent similar treatment. Sexual associations endemic in the treatment of animal appetite, and the need to manifest absolute virtue through empathy, drew attention to themselves in the literature for children.

In conclusion, my expectations, on beginning this exploration into the relationship between conduct literature and medical texts, were completely thwarted after a very short time. I had expected to find some representations of women which informed them, in detail, of exactly how to position their bodies, so that the desired meanings could be unambiguously discerned: in effect, information about a sophisticated code of communication. Instead, I found that conduct literature does not directly deal with the actions and positioning of the body at all. In women's conduct literature, this lack appears to be symbolised by advice given to cover over and hide the female body at all costs.

The notion of maternal impurity barely contained within these texts serves to question the very notion of eighteenth-century conduct literature itself. Such questioning offers evidence of a structural dimension, provided by this form, which reinforces the idea of a construct of maternity. This form tells certain groups of people how they ought to behave. By implication therefore, it exposes what it seeks to obscure, which is how they actually behave. At the same time, it stands as evidence for an uncertain social context which cannot comfortably accommodate a newly-emerging field of biological enquiry.

Within this context, the socialisation of a system of morality was at the fundamental core of its anxiety surrounding the body. What was produced by these layers of internal contradiction, however, cannot be narrowed down to a means of 'homogenising' the child and woman in order to render the woman 'sinless', within a dialectic of presence and absence which is more familiar to the narrative fiction of the period. Neither does it only accord with the Christian-rooted notion of celebration and simultaneous disgust, which are associated with the mother's body, nor to what Flynn calls dichotomous portrayals of sexual guilt and sexual innocence.[149] Each of these

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[149] For a fuller treatment of this idea, see Marina Warner, *Alone of All Her Sex*, 1976; new ed., (London, 1985), part 4, pp.177-272; Flynn, op.cit., p.140.

may, to some extent, be decyphered by meanings surrounding the mother's body, but what is particularly interesting about them is the ways in which woman and child are homogenised. It is the biological origin of the child, from the uncertain source of the mother's body, rather that an exclusive notion of Original Sin, which generates this exploratory merging of identities. Ironically, these similarities are a far cry from those which are bemoaned by Wollstonecraft and others: their comments seem more appropriate criticism of childish gestures which heroines sometimes reach for in sentimental fiction. The similarities between the 'natural' states of woman and child interleave uncomfortably, and blur the boundaries around notions of bodily purity and impurity, of innocence and guilt.

Also of central import here is the contribution made by eighteenth-century conduct literature to what Nancy Armstrong calls the "new kind of woman."[150] This woman, according to Armstrong and others, was the product of understanding gender in oppositional terms, and was designated the space of the domestic environment for her natural duties, the nurture of young children. She was considered the source of virtue, and can be seen as a virtuous, fragile and benevolent archetype who prefigures the nineteenth century 'angel in the house'.

Childs states unequivocally that conduct literature "encouraged conformity" during the period (231). With relevance to the depictions of ideal women in particular, Childs adds that after 1690, there was little representation of the lascivious, lustful woman (274). She has, it is argued, been totally replaced by the benevolent woman, source of all feeling and good-nature. Certainly, this selection of conduct literature displays all the attributes we might expect to see in relatively conservative writing. True, there is little variation within the corpus as a whole and, still less, maverick examples to challenge these codes. It is likely, due to the significant increase in this sort of printed output, and in reader numbers at this time, that the apparent reflection of some of the codes of conduct literature by the literate classes in particular was as a result of their influence.[151] Certainly, this is the prevailing opinion of several modern

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[150] Nancy Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction*, (Oxford, 1987), p.3.
[151] Armstrong and Tennenhouse, op.cit., p.4.

historians, including Nancy Armstrong and Leonard Tennenhouse, who argue that conduct books were, and still are, highly instrumental in the establishment both of changes and of maintaining social attitudes. They consider this to be especially the case in women's literature:

> ... conduct books for women, in particular, strove to reproduce, if not always to revise, the culturally approved forms of desire.[152]

Changes in the practices of breastfeeding amongst the 'middle classes' towards the end of the century are offered as evidence of this. Conduct literature is seen as helping to maintain social boundaries whilst encouraging the behavioural conformity of its readers.[153] As has been argued in this Chapter, however, whilst the need for eighteenth-century changes in conduct literature seem to arise in response to a need for the delineation of a 'natural' moral code, there is much ambiguity within the form itself. Unfortunately, it is virtually impossible for us to establish, other than by speculation, how far such inconsistencies were recognised by its readers; what can be said for certain, however, is that conduct literature only *appeared* to encourage conformity.

Maternity is explored in the literature of conduct in ways which differ from depictions of mother and child in narrative fiction: a major difference is that many novels 'employ' images of young children in order to assure the reader of a young woman's moral certainty. Instead of reaching for childish gestures, the writers of conduct literature tell women to demarcate their own province, and to distinguish their adult status more clearly, through appropriate behaviour. Overt emphasis, is placed, nevertheless, upon the need for the physical proximity of mother and child: narrative fiction, medical discourse, and conduct books, contribute, in subtly different ways, to a shared production of a sense of the domestic sphere, in which women and children exclusively move. Ironically, the homogenising of women with very young children, which is an integral part of conduct-book depictions, exposes the sanitising management of maternity which is linked with these depictions of mythologised

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[152] Ibid. p.1.
[153] Ibid. p.4.

motherhood. These forms, however, do not share a single strategic intention in every sense. A matrix of varied patterns of mystification, and subterrane ous fascination with anatomical truth, are collectively produced by these discourses. In each, tensions between these shapes explorations of feminine 'identity'.

In an increasingly secular society, traditional, doctrinally-rooted, and sexualised ideas of innocence and guilt are challenged by the literature of conduct, especially through equations made between women and children. Moral uncertainties which pervade this, underlie and underscore the need for a means of 'covering over' ambiguities presented by the body itself. Teaching a society, or a particular socio-economic group within that society, exactly what kinds of behaviour denote what moral meaning, seems to be a means of socialising moral absolutes which necessarily concentrates their focus upon the body. It is also one which is laced with discomfort because of the credence invested in an emerging field of biological enquiry. Alongside influences such as important economic change, eighteenth-century conduct literature is also the product of unprecedented concurrent activity in the field of anatomical enquiry. It exists to answer a need for clarity concerning the state of the body, and meanings associated with it: it seeks to assure. Ironically, its implicit contradictions reinforce the need for, and the nature of, a construction which portrays maternity as the source of human virtue.

Implicit in the uncertainty which surrounds the treatment of maternal feeding, is an ambiguous merger between the domains of woman and child. Ironically, in other increasingly visible ways, they were being recognised as separate, special states of being during this period. The literature of conduct is not simply employing this merger in order to reflect bio-medical justifications for a prescription of intimate mother-child relations. Paradoxically, the affinities between mothers and children here expose a sense of the anxiety surrounding the field of anatomical enquiry. Its findings significantly dictate the delineation of an ideal domestic arena which is important subject-matter to the conduct literature produced during the first three quarters of the eighteenth century.

Chapter Three.

The Charged Absence of Mother Figures in a Selection of Eighteenth-Century Narrative Fiction.

Introduction.

In his *Letter of Genteel and Moral Advice to a Young Lady* (1740) the Rev. Wetenhall Wilkes expresses his concern that women should limit their interest in scientific matters to the study of plant life alone.[1] Detailed knowledge of Boyle's advice on the husbandry, planting, and life-cycles of herbs and flowers is advocated; indeed is considered to be a praiseworthy accomplishment: in keeping with this, John Kelly's *Pamela's Conduct in High Life* (1741) relies on the associations of leisure and education inherent in such studies. The genteel social heights which Pamela had reached after her marriage to Mr.B. are suggested by their new pursuits: specific mention is made of the "Treatises of Gard'ning and Agriculture" which provide diversion in their sumptuous new home. Wilkes contradicts himself, however, in his justification of this special limited understanding of matters scientific for women readers:

> Farther than this your Sex is not at all concern'd, nor is it advisable for them to venture. The Truth of it is, you might consume your whole life in the study of one single Science or any one Branch of it without arriving at the Knowledge of all its qualities.[2]

At a time when there was a great deal of medical curiosity about the human body, and especially the female body, it is reasonable to assume that the subject of anatomy would be included in Wilkes's caution to female readers.[3] Moreover, this

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[1] Rev. Wetenhall Wilkes, *A Letter of Genteel and Moral Advice To a Young Lady*, (Dublin, 1740).

[2] Ibid. p.104.

[3] These are discussed in detail in Chapter Two, which deals with the relationship between medical discovery and eighteenth-century conduct advice. The basis of the argument is that the biological field of inquiry, and the ideas of naturalness which it produced, ironically necessitated the direct emphasis within the literature itself upon justifying and sanitising the role of the mother.

author's preoccupation with physical displays of modesty in the rest of his advice manual serves to remove any remaining ambiguity: modesty is strongly associated with the human body and how this body reveals the human character. Women readers, however, had to confine their interest to plants because anatomical knowledge, perhaps even the pure maternal body, remained uncertain and therefore implicitly dangerous.

Wilkes's anxiety about scientific discovery serves to illuminate my findings so far. There were differences in the nature of anatomical information which was intended for different audiences. These render problematic the idea that, by the end of the century, anatomical knowledge had served to justify roles, and that these had become firmly culturally established.[4] The subject of the second half of this thesis will be the treatment of medical ideas of maternity in another form of writing: eighteenth-century narrative fiction. Whilst its relationship with medical writing is less obvious than that of conduct literature, fiction possesses some of the features associated with lay-medical literature. The ways in which fiction treats ideas of maternity are explored here for a number of reasons, not least because it finds a place for biological fact. Narrative fiction has much to offer by way of extending this study of representations of maternity, and what they contributed to a sense of gender-identity during the period. The first part of this Chapter will establish how research into female anatomy during the eighteenth century, and the production of narrative fiction during an overlapping period, have many indirect links which help to illuminate the treatment of maternity and physicality.

I will include as broad a selection of narrative fiction produced between the third and eighth decades of the period as the constraints of this study will allow. In an attempt to make my selection of forty works of fiction as representative as possible, twenty-one works written by women are included, as well as eighteen by male authors, and one whose author remains anonymous. Less popular works are included alongside others which saw much reprinting. Some, for instance Daniel Defoe's *Moll Flanders*

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[4] See, for detail of the argument that a medically-idealised and authenticated maternal role was quickly disseminated to a reading public through popular literature, Ludmilla Jordanova, 'Naturalising the Family.', in L.J. Jordanova, Ed. *Languages of Nature*, (London, 1983), 86-116.

(1722), achieved healthy sales and were abridged and sold very much more cheaply in forms such as chap-books and single folded sheets.[5]

The products of the relationship between the medical idealisation of maternity and narrative fiction will be the concern of the second part of this Chapter. There is an absence of biological mother-figures in many of the works included in this selection, and the possible reasons for this raise important questions for my study. I shall argue that this absence of mother-figures is not simply an omission. It is a charged and significant absence, and has a great deal to contribute to the exploration of the treatment of maternity and physicality during the eighteenth century. Female anatomy appears to have provoked a curiosity which fiction sought to express, yet narrative fiction produced more than just a passive reflection of biological findings. It responded to biological 'truths' by imaginatively exploring and testing them out. Tensions are created in two ways. The natural maternal role is celebrated in these fictions, and the mother's body is removed and replaced within them. Exacerbated by this are further anxieties surrounding the issue of maternity and purity, as well as the 'medicalisation' of motherhood, a fixed prescription for a feminine identity and the domestic role which is produced by it.

For a large part of the eighteenth century, definitions of what we call the novel remained uncertain. This is shown by the much-documented evolution of that which Henry Fielding, amongst others, tentatively introduced as a new "kind of Writing."[6] Some of Fielding's contemporaries tried to be more specific in naming narrative fiction, calling it by an assortment of different names as varied as 'novel', 'Romance', 'poetical prose', and even 'poem'.[7] There were direct links between medical ideas and this emergent fiction. One of these is that several authors of fiction were either medical men themselves, like Tobias Smollett, or had close friendships with progressive and influential doctors, like Samuel Richardson. Others clearly demonstrate their own

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[5] *M.F.*

[6] Henry Fielding, *Joseph Andrews*, 1742; D. Brooks-Davies, Ed. (Oxford, 1986), preface.

[7] See, for discussion of how eighteenth-century writers of fiction defined their work, Geoffrey Day, *From Fiction to the Novel*, (London, 1987).

preoccupations with the latest medical information: Laurence Sterne's display of detailed knowledge of reproductive, circulatory, and nervous systems betrays his great interest in medical and physical matters in spite of having had neither formal medical training nor a medical occupation.[8]

Eighteenth-century narrative fiction shares many other indirect links with medical and lay-medical writing. The relationship between medical discourse and narrative fiction was also strengthened by a number of other features. One of these was the intimate association of narrative fiction with conduct literature. In its most explicit form, conduct literature evolved during the eighteenth century, apparently in response to a society's need to re-order domestic arrangements and provide better care for its children. As we have already seen, a large corpus of eighteenth-century conduct literature for young women was devoted to conveying rules for modes of female behaviour which were biologically justifiable, as well as improving to the reader. Connections between conduct literature and narrative fiction have, of course, been amply described during and since the eighteenth century. Richardson's words in the postscript of *Clarissa* (1747-1748) suitably exemplify an eighteenth-century belief in the educating and improving potential of fiction:

> Terror and commiseration leave a *pleasing anguish* in the mind, and fix the audience in such a serious composure of thought as is much more lasting and delightful, than any little transient starts of joy and satisfaction .... And it will, moreover, be remembered that the author at his first setting out, apprised the reader, that the story was to be looked upon as the vehicle only to the instruction.[9]

Clearly, Richardson equated this form of writing with the explicit aims of the literature of conduct: many modern writers also share this sentiment, agreeing on the principle

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[8] See Laurence Sterne, *Tristram Shandy*, 1759-1767; 2nd ed., (London, 1760) ;Idem, *A Sentimental Journey*, 1768; Ian Jack, Ed. (Oxford, 1989).
[9] *Cl.*, postscript, pp.1497, 1499.

similarities between conduct literature and fiction.[10] In this study, I propose to show that there were other more subversive, less obvious links between these two forms concerning their treatment of the mother, and their relationships with medical writing and ideas. In some sense, conduct literature attached conflicting meanings to certain representations of the mother's body. Similar conflicts may have produced a notable absence of her equivalent in a significant number of works of narrative fiction from the same period.

The historical context of both forms of literature is also important. Growth in production of narrative fiction took place in concurrence with new medical discoveries concerned with the female body in particular. It is probable that the same printing presses were used to produce the first editions of each kind of book: writers of fiction such as Charlotte Lennox, Henry Fielding and Sarah Scott shared the publisher A. Millar with medical men such as Thomas Thompson, whose work on smallpox was one among numerous discussions of this disease.[11] Similarly, the prolific publisher J. Johnson produced Wollstonecraft's *Mary, a Fiction* (1788) between several erudite works which investigate female reproduction, including William Hunter's definitive texts about pregnancy.[12] The historical concurrence of narrative fiction and medical writing was peculiar to this period. Its significance does not end simply in the shared historical period in which these forms sought to express new ideas or even older ideas in an original way. There is another feature which reflects this aspect of the relationship between medical texts concerned with the female body and fiction. As I shall explain more fully later in this Chapter, readers were persuaded to see an interchangebility of the actual fictional text with its subject-matter, which was often an individual female figure.

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[10] See, for examples, Spender, op.cit., and Katherine Hornbeak, 'Richardson's Familiar Letters and Domestic Conduct Books', in *Smith College Studies in Modern Languages*, XIX (No. II), (January 1938), 1-29.

[11] A. Millar published H. Fielding, *Joseph Andrews*, (London, 1742); Sarah Scott, *The History of Cornelia*, (London, 1750); H. Fielding, *Amelia* (London, 1751); Charlotte Lennox, *The Female Quixote*, (London, 1752); Thomas Thompson, *An Enqiry into Small-Pox*, (London, 1752).

[12] J. Johnson published William Hunter, *An Anatomical Description of the Human Gravid Uterus*, (London, 1774); Idem. *Two Introductory Lectures*, (London, 1784); Mary Wollstonecraft, *Mary, a Fiction*, (London, 1788); Robert Bland, *Observations on Parturition*, (London, 1794); John Burns, *The Anatomy of the Gravid Uterus*, (London, 1799).

Some relatively recent studies, such as those of Dale Spender, and the more convincing argument of Robert Erickson, have claimed that the novel form was 'feminised' because of its subject matter, authorship, readership and imagery.[13] During the eighteenth century, fiction was sometimes described in terms of human animation. Henry Fielding's preface to *Joseph Andrews* (1742) lent physical shape to the 'form' of writing as the author attempted to explain the nature of the imaginative writing which makes up the subsequent text. He drew a comparison between the praise of art which appeared real, which seemed to "breathe", and pointed towards equating his writing still more closely with the human form, and with characters who "appear to think."[14] Sterne's obsessive character Walter Shandy, who is thoroughly embroiled in questions surrounding anatomy and generation, perhaps attributes a gender to *Tristram Shandy* (1759-1767) itself. Donna Landry and Gerald Maclean's cautious case for equating *Tristram Shandy* with the anatomy of a woman is unsurprising in the light of the consideration given, within Sterne's novel, for many aspects of human origin.[15] Other authors, as we shall see, described the nature of what they were writing in terms of a woman who is 'alive' because its purpose was life-giving and nurturing. Close equations between fictional collections of letters and the female form were produced by a variety of means. These, too, serve to collocate plenty of eighteenth-century fiction still closer with the idea of the woman's bodily identity.

The treatment of bio-medical findings provided another close association between fiction and this area of anatomical research. The complex pattern of dissemination which Chapters One and Two explain can be seen as producing a sense of biological theory which had some imaginative qualities akin to those of fiction. More than at any preceding time in the history of medicine, newly-discovered biological

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[13] Robert Erickson, *Mother Midnight*, (New York, 1986); Dale Spender, *Mothers of the Novel*, (London, 1986). Spender's claims about the predominance of a female readership for the novel - a point upon which her argument about the feminisation of the novel is heavily based - has been challenged in studies of library records such as Paul Kaufman, *Libraries and their Users*, (London, 1969); Idem, *Borrowings from the Bristol Library 1773-1784*, (Charlottesville, 1960).

[14] H. Fielding, *Joseph*, Preface, 6.

[15] Donna Landry and Gerald Maclean, 'Of Forceps, Patents and Paternity', *Eighteenth Century Studies*, XXIII (No. 4), (1990), p.542.

'facts' concerning the nature of, and roles within, human reproduction were questioned, added to, explained, and even rejected, or challenged by different interpretations. My argument is that the exploratory and uncertain parts of the theory of generation itself contributed to other uncertainties: these brought together mythic and imaginative elements. These were produced and augmented by the debate about these medical facts and through the way in which biological findings were made available to readers of popular literature. The imaginative qualities shared by anatomical findings and narrative fiction of the same period could be seen as having had particular implications for the composition and content of the latter.

A brief discussion of both eighteenth-century and modern ideas concerned with the nature of the prose fiction of the period will also follow because, in some sense, several of the writers of the fiction of the period themselves suggested that narrative fiction possessed distinctive 'maternal' qualities. According to some accounts, the effects of fiction upon the reader appeared to mimic biological processes of generation and maternal nurture.

i. Eighteenth Century Narrative Fiction: Feminised Text?

A number of features of the relationship between eighteenth-century bio-medical and fiction writing help to support my argument about the dissemination of medical ideas about maternity. Of course, a full study of the generic structure of fiction during the period would provide enough material for many complete Chapters. In this study, I want to concentrate upon the images and ideas which are presented in a selection of narrative fiction of the period: it is appropriate to include a brief discussion of some theories which identify fiction with the female. Some modern interpretations have proposed a 'feminine', and sometimes more specifically, a maternal quality which intimately related to the structure and nature of fiction.[16] This is a notion which seems to further illuminate my exploration of the relationship between bio-medical and literary

[16] See footnote 13.

culture, because it suggests another level on which narrative fiction responded to the inquiry into the woman's role in the generation and nurture of children.

Eighteenth-century fiction was not unique in offering numerous examples of 'personified' texts. An extensive search of material is definitely not required to provide evidence for this; examples abound, some as old as the books of Daniel, Ruth, and Luke in the Old and New Testaments. These identify the subject and often its author very closely with his or her 'book'. It is easy to see how such identification of the self can be represented metaphorically through the book. This is not very far removed from the idea of manifesting the body, the physical self. Even in the lengthy and rather banal warnings about Romance fiction which so characterised the eighteenth-century response to this tradition, arguments often showed a woman reader becoming a ridiculous heroine of Romance. It was intimated that her character *and* person were indistinct from the content of her books. The pages of *The Spectator* (1711-1714) yield a representative example: Leonora's personal library is examined by a visitor before he meets Leonora herself. Each work symbolises an aspect of Leonora's character. The way in which her character has been especially shaped by numerous volumes of Romance fiction is emphasized, then re-emphasized. Finally, the interchange between woman and books is stressed again when both visitor and reader meet Leonora, who has been waiting in the room adjoining her library. Her person and character are intended to be a disappointing realisation of her reading.[17]

This conflation between the female body itself and narrative fiction was strengthened by the use of the name of the major female subject of the work to serve as its main title. Because books with titles such as *Amelia* (1751) or *Emmeline* (1788) had names which were interchangeable with that of principle female characters, this helped to merge the idea of woman and book closer together. The sentimental address in the preface to the tenth edition of *Pamela* (1775) could be referring to either person or text:

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[17] *The Spectator*. 1711-1714; Joseph Addison, Richard Steele et al, Eds., (London, 1713), II (No. 37), (1712), p.204.

> Little book, charming PAMELA! face the world, and never doubt of finding friends and admirers, not only in thine own country, but far from home.[18]

Further equation is made between Pamela's physical self and the letters which eventually comprise 'her' book, the text. Initially, when the secretness of her letters is threatened by the presence of Mr.B., Pamela conceals them under her outer garments.[19] She gradually perceives more and more of a need to keep her written responses to what is happening to her with greater secrecy: Mr.B. must not know of her plans nor of her interpretation of his behaviour. Correspondingly, her letters are hidden under another layer of clothing, leaving them still closer to her body:

> But I begin to be afraid my writings may be discover'd; for they grow large! I stitch them hitherto in my Under-coat, next my linen (149).

It is not surprising that certain bodily metaphors were employed in order to describe the self. Interest in ideas about the self also found expression in other modes of imaginative writing during the period. Something which drew attention to itself in some eighteenth-century discussion about narrative fiction in particular, however, was the suggested gendering of the form itself.

The twentieth-century critic Edward Said points to the exact opposite of the sort of gendering which I want to discuss here.[20] Fiction must , he claims, "mirror a process of engenderment or beginning and growth": this, Said continues, involves a process of "fathering-forth."[21] Even though Said also describes 'the novel' in terms of conception, he never makes an explicit connection between this idea of generation and motherhood. By way of contrast, his contemporary, Robert Erickson, has apparently used the Saidian model of 'the novel' achieving authenticity through its reduplication of life and unfolding of genealogy, yet his work is dominated by images and metaphors of the

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[18] *P.*, 10th ed., (London, 1775), Preface, viii.
[19] *P.*, 2nd ed., (Dublin, 1741), p.3.
[20] Edward Said, *Beginnings*, (Baltimore, 1975).
[21] Ibid. p.138.

female role in generation.[22] The whole process of narrative fiction, Erickson argues, consists of representations of gestation and birth.[23] This provides a central core for his thesis: there is a feminine matrix for the novel.[24]

This idea cannot be simply dismissed because it accords with the notion, prevalent during the period, that fiction was almost exclusively read by women. As we saw in Chapter One, arguments such as those of Kaufman challenge these assumptions.[25] Records of library membership do not present a consistent pattern between the number of female members, and the holdings of works of fiction. There is in addition to this further evidence which, in one sense, cannot be accounted for through assumptions made about the gender of readers of fiction. Several examples of eighteenth-century narrative fiction employ this idea of gendered texts in still more specific ways. In some commentaries on fiction at the time, the suggestion was that the nature of narrative fiction was more than merely feminine. It had a very close allegiance with an ideal representation of motherhood which was depicted in current medical writing.

Addison's *An Essay on the Pleasures of the Imagination* (1713) employs further suggestive use of female bodily metaphors to denote or explain the nature of fiction.[26] Didactic works which provided the reader with 'realistic' examples of virtue were distinguished from the world of commerce:

> It has been observed, that Men of Learning who take to Business, discharge it generally with greater Honesty than Men of the World. The chief Reason for it I take to be as follows. A man that has spent his Youth in Reading, has been used to find Virtue extolled, and Vice stigmatised.[27]

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[22] Ibid. pp.82, 88; Erickson, op.cit.
[23] Erickson, op.cit., p.48.
[24] Ibid. p.203.
[25] Kaufman, *Borrowings*, p.121 ; Idem. *Libraries*, pp. 223-227.
[26] Addison, 'An Essay on the Pleasures of the Imagination', in *The Spectator*, VI (No. 469), (1713), 411-421.
[27] Ibid. VI (No. 469), (1713), 412.

Already, there are striking similarities between what didactic literature had to offer, and the domestic arena which we have seen portrayed in eighteenth-century conduct literature, in which mothers nurtured and imbued their children with good-nature and benevolence. These similarities are sharpened later in Addison's essay by the way in which reading is described as imbibing goodness: the nature of imaginative writing is described using a metaphor of maternal nurture; it imbues sweetness into wider society. Reading works of imaginative literature, he argues, engenders hope which "in general sweetens Life, and makes our present Condition supportable, if not pleasing."[28]

This intimation is strengthened by an analogy drawn between the natural milk which is provided for an infant, the effect it produces upon the child, and a suggested parallel between prose writing or fiction, and feminine beauty:

> Milk is the first support of our childhood. The component parts of this are water, oil, and a sort of a very sweet salt called the sugar of milk.[29]

This view was apparently shared by Samuel Johnson. In an edition of *The Rambler* of 1752, he recommends reading works which involve "an act of the imagination."[30] Johnson asserts that this leads to all-important empathy and fellow-feeling with the characters and situations. Indirectly, a parallel was drawn between writing which required the response of the imagination, and which produced a socialising effect, and the idea of the mother's body which eighteenth-century conduct literature stressed was the source of human fellow-feeling and benevolence. Whilst the generic structure of narrative fiction mimiced a biological process of maternal nurture, the content of many works was anything but mimetic in its representation of mother figures and their roles. The significant absences of mothers will be the subject of the rest of this Chapter.

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[28] Ibid. VI (No. 469), (1713), 421.
[29] Ibid. VI (No. 469), (1713), 154.
[30] *The Rambler*, 1750-1752; Samuel Johnson, Ed., 2nd ed., (Edinburgh, 1751-1753), III, 54.

ii. Imaginative Qualities of Bio-Medical Research.

Gillian Beer, in her book on the relationship between Darwin's writing on evolutionary theory and late Victorian fiction, claims that when it is first advanced, a theory is at its most fictive.[31] This is because of the incomplete nature of hypothesis, which preserves a fictive quality until it is absolutely proven in some way. This premise forms the basis of Beer's argument about a reciprocal relationship between scientific and literary culture which does not merely exist in the novelist's freedom to explore, in the case of Beer's study, Darwinian evolutionary theory of the late nineteenth century. Beer's argument does not, however, address the problem that Darwin's theory was neither intended nor received as a work of fiction: indeed, the most notorious immediate response to the *Origin of Species* (1859) was that Darwin had produced an outrageous work of blasphemy.[32] Beer's idea of the fictive state of a scientific theory is not of direct relevance to my study: this is because there is little truth in the notion that the eighteenth-century medical world tried to create an alternative world akin to that of fiction. In spite of this, certain features which provide a broad framework for Beer's ideas are of relevance to this study of eighteenth-century medical writing and fiction. The medical maternal ideal at this time could be seen as at its most uncertain and thus at its closest point to imaginative invention. Rather than using Beer's idea that scientific findings can preserve a fictive quality, I want to suggest that the maternal ideal retained an imaginative quality during the period, and one which was current with the use of imaginary contexts within narrative fiction. Eighteenth-century scientific findings about the female body were shown to be proven facts: at the same time, they also encouraged plenty of debate and further experimentation. The medical idealisation of the female body during the second quarter of the eighteenth century remained, in some sense, hypothetical and uncertain.

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[31] Gillian Beer, *Darwin's Plots*, (London, 1983), Introduction, 1.
[32] Charles Darwin, *On The Origin of Species*, (London, 1859).

Although the ovist theory - that the mother's body provided the chief source from which the child was formed - was widely held as the best explanation of the origin of an embryo during the first three decades of the eighteenth century, even its supporters were uncertain about it. Ovism represented a break with Aristotelean tradition.[33] John Mowbray's *The Female Physician* (1730) adheres to the view that the first embryonic stage is an egg produced by the mother.[34] Despite this, a few pages later on, Mowbray's explanation is distinctly ambiguous. He admits to some uncertainty concerning theories of formation because of the difficulties introduced by being unable to witness the first seven days of embryonic development, suggesting that the respective responsibilities of either parent are also "more the *Philosopher's* than the *Physician's* business."[35]

Mowbray's doubts prefigured a temporary shift in thinking about the mother's body as a primary source for the child later in the century.[36] Physicians of the mid-eighteenth century openly wavered in their support of the ovist theory of reproduction which attributed the origin and formation of the foetus almost entirely to the mother's body. The thirty or so years after 1730 saw a shift of opinion: male preformation theory, with its insistence that the child was created in miniature by the paternal body, only to be nurtured within the mother's uterus, was largely back in vogue. This was in spite of the adherence, by embryologists themselves, to the ovist theory throughout the century. By 1760, Gasking states, the publication of Haller's new ovist theory had helped to establish ovism as the predominant explanation, and so it remained until the discovery of the nature of fertilisation during the nineteenth century. A crude but biologically accurate idea of the ways in which a child is the equal product of the mother's *and* father's body was finally 'resolved' during 1828.[37] Dissection, whilst it

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[33] For a fuller account of Harvey's view of ovism, and Leeuwenhoek's contrasting claim that animalcules visible under the microscope prove the male role in producing autonomous living units, see Elizabeth Gasking, *Investigations into Generation*, (London, 1967), pp.71, 97, 107-108, 151.

[34] John Mowbray, *The Female Physician*, (London, 1730), p.20.

[35] Ibid. p.23, (Mowbray's italics).

[36] Gasking, op.cit., p.108.

[37] In using the term 'resolved', I mean that this discovery ended uncertainty surrounding the maternal and paternal bodies as sources of new life. Of course, this understanding continued to develop, particularly with the invention of the electron microscope during the mid-twentieth century, the isolation of nuclear material, and the discovery by Franklin, Watson, and Crick, of D.N.A structure which explains meiosis.

had enabled the Leyden school in the Netherlands to discover and label *Graafian follicles* and female *ova* by the close of the seventeenth century, contributed to the provisional, uncertain nature of the whole function of the female body in human generation, by providing pictures of the mutual harmony of the mother and her unborn child. These pictures laid open the mysterious confluence between mother and embryo at the commencement of human life. They showed that the child had a natural affinity with the mother's body. They helped to ensure that the ovists, with little more persuasive evidence than the animalculists, had more widespread support throughout most of the eighteenth century. What could be clearly seen with the naked eye or under a microscope served to imply what could not be entirely explained; mother and child were regarded as inseparable. In this sense, elements of the idea of the mother's body as virtually the total source of the child shared the uncertain territory of writing of imagination.[38] It is not surprising then, in the light of the close relationship shared by the two forms of writing, to discover that fiction itself revealed more than a deep interest in biological findings during this period, and sought not only to reflect some of them, but also to test them out.

There is, of course, evidence showing that a few women would have had a certain amount of access to a medical debate about their bodies which largely excluded female readers. Letters written to *The Gentleman's Magazine* (1731-1922) by interested parties such as Jane Hughes under the pseudonym Melissa, Catherine Cockburn, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, and the writer of a collection of correspondence about childbirth, demonstrate that some women openly read this periodical, and were able to participate in the latest medical debates which sought to understand the origins of human life.[39] In addition, the evidence offered by Kaufman's studies of membership and the borrowing patterns of town and city libraries during the second half of the eighteenth century shows that libraries in certain areas of England could have provided

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[38] Beer, op.cit., Introduction.

[39] Alison Adburgham, *Women in Print*, (London, 1972), pp. 80-81, (Hughes and Cockburn); *G.M.*, IX (1739), 525, (Lady Mary Wortley Montagu); XX (1750), 109, 312, 413, (letters on childbirth).

women members with access to a limited collection of medical texts.[40] Records of membership names and addresses for one Birmingham library reveal a total of thirty-two women members during 1779, and there were four at the Bristol Library Society in 1782.[41] Kaufman's conclusions point to the possibility that some books borrowed by men may have been shared, but do not explore this. As was discussed in Chapter One, however, other exclusively medical libraries sprang up in the second half of the decade on account of the very limited numbers of medical texts held by ordinary libraries. This challenges the idea that female library members had significant access to medical writings through the borrowing method.

The way in which medical images and information about maternity were made available to female audiences in particular, and popularised, also contributes to a sense of the imaginative quality of this area of science. As the findings of Chapter One indicate - ways in which household cookbooks, household health manuals, periodical publications, and midwifery texts intended for female readers represented maternity - there was no direct migration of images such as that of the gravid, full-term uterus which are examined and presented in painstaking detail in anatomists' medical writings. In contrast to examples such as the *Gentleman's Magazine*, and detailed medical texts, forms of literature which intended their audience to be female either provided no evidence of any recent medical findings, or did so selectively, avoiding any mention of anything explicitly concerned with the female role in generation. A third group of texts, which includes best-selling household lay-medical material, simply presented its readers with advice for good mothering practice which was biologically justifiable, without providing more than vague, fleeting references to the medical information upon which this was founded. It is hardly surprising, therefore, to find Samuel William Fores - writing under the name of John Blunt - complaining that women had little idea about the nature of, and management of their own bodies, especially in the event of childbirth:

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[40] Kaufman, *Borrowings*, p. 78 ; Idem, *Libraries*, pp. 210, 216.

[41] The female members of the Bristol Library Society make up a total percentage of 2.9%; those of the Birmingham library comprise 6.9%.

> ... families have been kept in such extreme ignorance respecting parturition, that as soon as a woman falls in labour, the whole house is in confusion, supposing the delivery depends on the presence of the [male] operator.[42]

Apparently in keeping with the idea of preserving female modesty, even female midwives could not witness the dissected female anatomy in the cause of their education. Whilst some female authors of midwifery texts were aware that these findings could be incorporated into a form of training for all female midwives, it was repeatedly stressed throughout the century that few had the opportunity to see either dissections, pictures, or literature concerned with the gravid uterus. What is of particular relevance to my argument is that this evidence points to the very partial way in which medical knowledge about female anatomy was passed on to practising midwives at this time. Few received anatomical training, whilst others would have had to rely upon their own experience and whatever could be gleaned from textbooks of midwifery. An oral tradition, however, would have informed the experience of a significant proportion of female midwives at a time when there was no formal training for them, and literacy was not a prerequisite to practice. Information passed from midwife to midwife was more likely to reflect diverse practical, tried and tested methods and recipes, and conclusions about these which were made according to the experience and beliefs of those responsible for passing them on. By contrast, the medical world was trying to establish a uniform interpretation of the opened body as fact. Information disseminated by word of mouth is notoriously prone to distortion over a period of time. Numerous subjective interpretations made by eighteenth-century midwives probably failed to fully incorporate newly-discovered anatomical knowledge. Instead, it is likely that oral information was more varied and akin to many superstitious household cookbook assumptions which were made about little-understood yet much-witnessed complaints such as smallpox, rickets and croup. There is plenty of evidence to show that there was limited and selective transmission of information concerning the

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42 Fores, op. cit., xix.

current medical debate to this group. This, together with passing on information about women's bodies via word of mouth contributed, to some extent, to a wider sense of imaginative uncertainty surrounding the subject of human origin, and in particular, the mother's role in this.

I have been trying to show how bio-medical knowledge reached a female audience, and the possible consequences of this process. Even amongst female midwives - whose access to such understanding was justifiable for reasons of professional skill - such information remained remote to all but those few who had received training in the subject of anatomy.[43] The uncertainty which characterised this dissemination of knowledge was significant because it coloured a society's understanding of the function and importance of a mother's body as the site of her child's origin. Together with other contributing factors and circumstances, this resulted in conjecture about ideas surrounding human generation and the maternal role. Such uncertainty, particularly amongst women, may have been liberated by imagining. Fiction offered an imaginative space for these mythic elements to be brought together and explored. Concentrated within this response to uncertainty about anatomy were complicated and far-reaching fictional representations of maternity.

iii. Conduct Literature and Narrative Fiction Compared.

Numerous links between conduct literature and the fiction of the period were made by eighteenth-century commentators, and several have also been made in modern times. The many-sided relationship of imaginative ideas concerned with maternity was also intimately related to conduct advice. Conduct literature has much to add to this discussion of how mythic elements in depictions of maternity were created and sustained during this time. There are many similarities between conduct literature and

[43] The records of obstetrician William Smellie's midwifery training classes provides us with a clearer idea of just how few female midwives actually received a scientifically-based training in female anatomy. During the period 1751-1760, Smellie taught 900 pupils, five of whom were women.

narrative fiction in their testing-out, rejection and assimilation of some of these possibilities.

Several eighteenth-century writers of fiction insisted that their work was very closely related to the literature of conduct. Richardson's biographers repeatedly point out the pains which this author took in order to establish very close links and draw parallels between his works of fiction and conduct literature. Extensive revisions were made to *Pamela* (1740-1741). As well as fictional letters and poems about *Pamela*, supposedly received by the 'editors', and printed before the main body of the text in later editions of the first volume, Richardson's embellishments also included two further volumes added to the original pair two years after the initial publication. This appears to have been in response to ridicule, criticism, and, of course, catch-penny sequels.[44] Even in the last years of his life he continued to write and to revise marginalia consisting of instructions to the 'reader' of *Clarissa* which precisely denoted the way he intended the text to be read as a work teaching appropriate conduct, particularly for the unmarried woman.[45] Richardson devoted a great deal of energy to such revisions and to reinforcing claims for his fiction to be considered as conduct literature. Eaves and Kimpel note that this was taken to the extreme: Richardson, they say, was thoroughly preoccupied with the idea that fiction was to be read and understood in the same way as conduct literature. Geoffrey Day seems to be in agreement with Richardson's biographers. He notes that Richardson did not even name himself as author on the title page of *Clarissa*. He rendered himself as far removed as possible from the creative state by including his name only as printer of the work.[46] Richardson's production of another book - *A Collection of the Moral and Instructive Sentiments, Maxims, Cautions and Reflections* (1755) - which explicitly draws out the most important of the

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[44] *P.*, 10th ed. (London, 1775), four 'letters', one poem, and answers to two of the letters by a correspondent, pp.vi-xxv. For Richardson's concern over imitators such as John Kelly, see *P.*, 6th ed., (London, 1746), IV, Advertisment, 495.

[45] T.C.D. Eaves and B.D. Kimpel, *Samuel Richardson - A Biography*, (Oxford, 1971), p.517. Speech marks are given to the word 'reader' because Richardson made many of these amendments in his personal editions of *Cl.*

[46] G. Day, op.cit., p.90.

instructions demonstrated within his fictions, adds weight to their contention.[47] In considering these claims for a straightforward equation between conduct literature and fiction, the literature of female conduct is of particular relevance because women are the subject of much of the fiction, and also because domestic conduct books produced specifically for women actually surpassed in quantity and variety those which were directed at men throughout the period.[48] Eliza Haywood's introductory Chapter in *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless* (1751) explicitly emphasizes the importance of teaching young women how to behave, and what they ought to be learning. Haywood's warning recalls one of the arguments which she shared with Mary Astell's *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies* which had been first published more than half a century earlier, between the years 1696 and 1697. Haywood repeats Astell's warning about the dangers of spending too much time upon physical appearance and of criticising other people's conduct instead of concentrating on refining personal behaviour:

> ... who, while she passes the severest censure on the conduct of her friend, will be at the trouble of taking a retrospect on her own.[49]

The stated intention of many writers of fiction was to reinforce the learning of appropriate kinship rules and to teach readers of each sex how to behave properly. The plot was used in order to convey this purpose, and was presented as if it were 'true'. On the first page of *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless*, the reader is immediately introduced to the theme of virtuous women's conduct and the coquettish but otherwise exemplary heroine, Miss Betsy.[50] Modern theorists of eighteenth-century fiction have described the Richardsonian model as heavily influential upon Haywood's later works of fiction: certainly, the appearance of 'truth' is similarly carefully crafted like Richardson's presentation of a 'history' in the preface to the first volume of *Clarissa.*

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[47] Richardson, *A Collection of the Moral and Instructive Sentiments*, (London, 1755).
[48] Nancy Armstrong and Leonard Tennenhouse, *The Ideology of Conduct*, (London, 1987), p.4.
[49] Haywood, *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless*, 1751; Intr. D. Spender, (London, 1986), p.1; Mary Astell, *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies*, 1696-1697; in Bridget Hill, Ed. *The First English Feminist*, (Aldershot, 1986), Part 1, pp.140-142.
[50] Haywood, *Betsy*, p.1.

The 'history', we are told, has been selectively re-worked by an Editor and 'his' "judicious friends."[51] The nature and purpose of the story are of secondary importance. They serve, 'they' claim, merely to maintain interest and to sweeten the pill of such lessons: its importance is only as a "*Vehicle* to the more necessary INSTRUCTION" (vi). There is much in common between this and an analysis of the nature of fiction in the first volume of Johnson's *The Rambler* (1751) published less than two years later. Here, a new form of fiction is distinguished from the fantastic "fictions of the last age" with their hermitages, woods, battles and damsels.[52] Attempts to exhibit life meant that examples of narrative fiction were intended to serve as "lectures of conduct."[53] Somehow, examples which were seen as close and 'accurate' mirrors of life were considered more effective as illustrations of moral lessons. They may have been favoured above other enduring forms - such as the allegories which comprise Aesop's fables - because their verisimilitude made the message quite literally, more applicable, more urgent.

The practice of drawing upon the similarities between their fiction and conduct literature also often appears to be part of a process of defining a 'form' of literature which writers were anxious should not be associated with, or mistaken for, 'Romances' and 'novels'. Fanny Burney's statement of intent to write a novel which is quite a separate thing from gaudy and inane Romance fiction has been identified by Day as one of the first indications that the form had achieved a degree of common consent.[54] Susanna Gunning's *Family Pictures, A Novel* (1764) offers an even earlier example of this because its title boldly announces what it is.[55] An element of suspicion surrounding novels continued beyond this time, of course. Before the 1780s and publications such as Burney's *Evelina* (1778) and subsequent collections of novels such as those of Mrs

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[51] It is worth noting that Haywood also employs this device of pretending that a body of writers are responsible for a work in her periodical, *The Female Spectator*, (London, 1744-1746),which was in circulation four years before Richardson began the publication of *Cl.*

[52] *The Rambler*, I (No. 4), (1751), 25.

[53] Ibid. p.26.

[54] G. Day, op.cit. This study considers the perception of fiction in England from the seventeenth century to the twentieth, with its presumption that every work of prose fiction is a novel. See Fanny Burney, *Evelina*, 1778; E.A. Bloom and L.D. Bloom, Eds. (Oxford, 1988), Preface.

[55] [Susanna Minifie Gunning] *Family Pictures, A Novel*, (Dublin, 1764).

Barbauld, however, novels were not perceived as novels by a majority of writers.[56] Writers of the period habitually proclaimed their contempt for ordinary novels, and boasted of the exceptional character of their own works of fiction: in many cases, this different character was closely identified with domestic conduct books. Defoe, for example, distinguished *Moll Flanders* from novels and Romances which were not "Genuine", and sustained the pretence about the authenticity of his work throughout:

> It is true, that the original of this Story it puts into new Words, and the stile of the famous Lady we here speak of, is a little alter'd, particularly she is made to tell her own Tale in modester Words than she told it at first (i-ii).

By printing *A Collection of the Moral and Instructive Sentiments* seven years after the first volumes of *Clarissa* were published, Richardson sought to "strongly enforce" the instruction concerned with individual roles and morality which he consciously regarded as the purpose of his so-called "Histories".[57] Far from having the sorts of doubts which dogged him throughout his writing life about his fiction, Richardson's satisfaction with his collection of moral platitudes is certain. Presumably to stress the importance he attached to the instructive purpose of his fiction, he sent a copy of this collection to the daughter of a late friend.[58] Without a doubt, Richardson would have been delighted with a letter received anonymously from a prisoner who only signed his letter with the initials B.F. This letter told Richardson that Sir Charles's virtue had brought about the writer's conversion to Christianity.

Letters provide one of the strongest arguments for forging an intimate, even a mimetic relationship between fiction and conduct literature. Of course, several writers of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century conduct literature had employed the epistolary form, and some of the authors of collections of letters were also those of narrative fiction. Locating the roots of the epistolary novel in the tradition of everyday model-

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[56] Anna Barbauld, *The British Novelists*, (London, 1810).
[57] Richardson, *Collection*, Preface, vi.
[58] Eaves and Kimpel, op.cit., p.326. Richardson sent a copy of the *Collection* to Aaron Hill's daughter.

letter collections which sought to teach rules of behaviour had passed into a state of critical assumption by the time Katherine Hornbeak was examining the history of the letter during the 1930s.[59] Certain collections of fictional letters powerfully reinforced the teachings of domestic conduct books. Because they provided explicit examples of how individuals should behave in a given set of circumstances, and in doing so, presented the reader with a code of conduct, they might more accurately be described as 'conduct letters'. Apart from obvious differences in form, Richardson stressed that these letters shared the same aim as his other writing: in the preface to *Familiar Letters* (1741), he insists that their purpose is to "inculcate the principles of Virtue and Benevolence", a justification which was later echoed almost word for word in the introduction to *A Collection of Moral and Instructive Sentiments* .[60]

This affinity provides the framework for Hornbeak's argument about model-letters whose adaptation, at the end of the seventeenth century, to "the everyday needs of the middle and lower classes" also broadly coincided with certain changes taking place in the content and purpose of conduct literature. Also of relevance was the trend towards amending the contents of new editions of model-letter books, towards increasing the numbers of letters written about, or for, the use of women and girls. The strength of this assumption concerning letters and epistolary fiction is especially evident in the case of *Pamela,* which appears very closely related to collections such as the enormously popular *Young Secretary's Guide* (1687), Goodman's *The Experienc'd Secretary* (1699) and later, Richardson's *Familiar Letters.*[61] This is because there is so little interchange between Pamela's letters and the few written in reply by her correspondents, coupled with the trend mentioned earlier towards an increasingly disproportionate number of letters providing examples for women in model-letter collections.[62] Hornbeak has outlined how, during 1699, around 31% of Goodman's

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[59] Hornbeak, 'The Complete Letter-Writer.', in *Smith College Studies in Modern Languages*, XV (No. iii-iv), (1934), 1-148.

[60] Richardson, *Familiar Letters*, (London, 1741); Idem. *Collection*, Introduction, vi.

[61] John Hill, *The Young Secretary's Guide*, (London, 1687); Thomas Goodman, *The Experienced Secretary*, 1699; 2nd ed., (London, 1700); Richardson, *Letters*

[62] See note 59.

collection consisted of letters relating to women, whilst in later editions of Hill's text, the equivalent figure was 34%. With the publication of *The Secretary's Guide* in the first decade of the eighteenth century, and subsequently of Richardson's collection, this figure rose from 50% to around 60%.[63]

Striking connections existed between letter-collections and the epistolary novel: historical chronology and similarities of authorial intention in employing the letter-format were largely responsible for these. There were, however, further links between the literature of conduct and a significant proportion of eighteenth-century fiction. Ironically, these sometimes served to dissociate the two forms. In certain other instances, such as in the treatment of the maternal body in each, conduct literature and narrative fiction shared little-documented similarities. The relationship of each with a field of biological enquiry was an important factor within which lay crucial differences. The direct aim of conduct literature was to present examples of behaviour and appropriate social roles. Nancy Armstrong has noted that conduct literature for women was - and still is - primarily used in order to essentialize women and to fix their natures.[64] The next part of this Chapter will discuss how the idea that eighteenth-century fiction is, to a large degree, synonymous with conduct literature, has formed the basis for a number of twentieth-century studies of the novel. It will test out the theory shared both by eighteenth-century and modern writers concerning the interchangeability of domestic conduct book ideology with the ideology of fiction. This helps to explain one of the most neglected and challenging aspects of the relationship in question. There remain differences in the treatment of maternity for which equations between conduct literature and fiction offer no explanation. The relationship of each to an emerging field of biological enquiry is central to these.

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[63] Hornbeak, *Letters*, p.106.
[64] Armstrong and Tennenhouse, op.cit., p.4.

iv. Educating the Reader About Femininity.

The persuasions of those eighteenth-century novelists who strove to distinguish their narrative fiction from a tradition of improbable Romance fiction by emphasizing instruction have certainly had some success in modern times. The most obvious historical and formal similarities between the two forms of writing point to their interconnection A number of modern commentators are comfortable to accord eighteenth-century fiction a place within a defined corpus of literature which explicitly sought to teach and reinforce conduct. "Conduct-book writers offered one means of control; fiction, despite the suspicion with which it was viewed by such writers, provided another", writes Caroline Gonda in her discussion of the replacement of paternal authority with fictional daughters who, she argues, successfully internalised the law of the father.[65]

Others make no distinction at all between novels and works of literature whose titles betray their instructive purpose.[66] The primary concern of Spender's *Mothers of the Novel* (1986) is to list some one hundred eighteenth-century novels. Those chosen shared one common feature: each was written by a woman. Moreover, Spender claims that each was an important yet disregarded forerunner of celebrated women novelists including Burney and Austen. Included in her collection are titles such as Jane Barker's *A Patchwork Screen for the Ladies, or Love and Virtue Recommended* (1723), which consists of moral pieces such as prayers and hymns, together with recipes and numerous other separate articles, all of which are loosely connected through a dialogue between two fictional friends. Spender's list also includes still more explicit examples of conduct manuals. Another which received Richardson's endorsement, Jane Collier's satirical *Essay on the Art of Ingeniously Tormenting* (1753) - a copy of which he is

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[65] Caroline Gonda, 'Fathers and Daughters in Novels.', (Ph.D., Cambridge Univ., 1991), p.24.
[66] Spender, op.cit., pp. 119 - 137.

known to have given to Lady Bradshaigh - is also mentioned.[67] *A Mirror for the Female Sex* (1798), a conduct manual which provides examples of good feminine behaviour from ancient and modern history, and which was designed for school use, is also named as a 'novel'.[68] Collections of instructive fictional letters appear in Spender's collection. Included is a pious collection of *Twenty Letters from the Dead to the Living* (1728) by Elizabeth Rowe, herself one of Jane Barker's circle of friends.[69] It is worth noting that Clara Reeve's list of recommended books, added at the end of the first volume of her *Progress of Romance* (1785), includes Rowe's work in a selection of conduct manuals for young ladies. This is found alongside the moralising conduct works of Dr Gregory and Dr Fordyce, inveighed against for their severity by Mary Wollstonecraft seven years later.[70]

The lack of generic distinction which we have seen in evidence in Spender's collection of women novelists has been traced formally in Joanna Dales's discussion of the effects of Puritanism on eighteenth-century novelists, after the momentum of the Puritan movement had been exhausted.[71] Dales considers Defoe and Richardson in particular to be writers of fictionalised conduct-books, a claim which she substantiates with references to their earliest works which use rudimentary narrative schemes in order to convey domestic conduct advice.[72] Dales takes note of the same theme in Hornbeak's comprehensive study of Richardson's writing.[73] They share the conclusion that the eighteenth-century novel evolved deeply indebted to, and in the shape of, conduct literature. Hornbeak succinctly describes this process:

> And so the wheel has come full circle. Over the shelf which holds Richardson's books, those serried rows from *Familiar Letters* to *Moral*

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[67] Jane Barker, *A Patchwork Screen for the Ladies*, (London, 1723); Jane Collier, *An Essay on the Art of Ingeniously Tormenting*, (London, 1753).
[68] Mary Pilkington, *A Mirror for the Female Sex*, 1798; 2nd ed., (London, 1799).
[69] Elizabeth Rowe, *Friendship in Death*, 1728; new ed., (Plymouth, 1814).
[70] Clara Reeve, *The Progress of Romance*, (Colchester, 1785), I, 103.
[71] Joanna Dales, 'The Novel as Domestic Conduct-Book.', (Ph.D., Cambridge Univ., 1970).
[72] Ibid. pp.70, 121.
[73] Hornbeak, *Richardson*.

and Instructive Sentiments, may be written "From Conduct Book to Conduct Book in one generation."[74]

Dales, it is true, briefly addresses some of the problems which this process entails, especially regarding the issues of marriage and fertility in *Moll Flanders* and *Roxana* (1724). Roxana's behaviour towards one of her sons, for instance, is shown to be problematic, yet no explanation for this is offered, it is consciously left unresolved.[75] Despite a remark that it is "strange to find Roxana blaming her son" for refusing to do what his mother tells him, Dales concludes that such examples of eighteenth-century fiction are carrying out the same functions as domestic conduct books.[76]

Seventeenth- and eighteenth-century conduct books are homogenised in Dales's thesis. Leaving undefined the differences between conduct advice produced between Medieval and modern times means that Dales's thesis cannot address the subtler aspects of the relationship between fiction and eighteenth-century conduct literature. There were numerous examples of Puritan-influenced conduct literature produced during the seventeenth century whose titles betrayed the bias of their contents. Teaching and reinforcing the duties of the individual to each member of the highly ordered family were key elements. Titles such as *The Husband's Instructions to his Family, or Household Observations Recommended to his Wife, Children and Servants* (1685) and *The Child's Testament; or the Young Mans Duty* (1691) demonstrate the emphasis which was placed upon this idea of duty (upon which the patriarchal organisation of the state also rested.)[77] Some of these books were reprinted countless times, and the successes of earlier editions may account for subsequent ones being published shortly afterwards by different printers. Unless a printing error is to blame, for instance, two printers with similar sounding names, Thomas Cockerill and Thomas Cotterell, printed editions of *The Schoole of Manners, or Rules for Children's Behaviour* in 1684 and 1685

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[74] Ibid. p.29.
[75] Dales, op.cit., p.85.
[76] Ibid. pp.57, 85. The treatment of fertility and children in *R.* and *M.F.* will be discussed more fully in the following Chapter.
[77] *The Husband's Instructions to his Family*, (London, 1685); *The Child's Testament*, (London, 1691).

respectively. Such patterns of production, together with the likelihood of careful regard for and preservation of relatively expensive books, would have assured that they continued to be read by subsequent generations, well into the eighteenth century.

Whilst I have argued that conduct books which were heavily Puritan-influenced maintained some of their influence after the turn of the century, the early years of that century saw an increasing production of conduct manuals aimed particularly at women.[78] During the second decade of the eighteenth century, there was a clear shift of emphasis, and it was one away from imitation of the aristocratic tradition, to one which advocated the intrinsic and natural value of the woman. An idea of natural order, and justifications for family relations based upon it, took the place of Biblical allusion which had shaped domestic arrangements and kinship ties. Armstrong and Tennenhouse make a persuasive case for how this religious bias found its source in Medieval devotional books for women.[79]

In Dales's study, no distinction is made between Scripturally-orientated teaching about maternal breastfeeding, and the growing eighteenth-century perception of the gravid maternal body as the source of examples of good feeding practice.[80] Although Dales acknowledges some sense of secularisation during the following century, the effects of non-Puritan influences upon the re-organisation of the domestic arena are not taken into account. Important differences in the purpose and content of eighteenth-century conduct literature compared with that produced in order to teach kinship rules ordained by God, are not explored. There are many examples of domestic conduct manuals produced between the second and seventh decades of the eighteenth century which responded to, and were based upon, discoveries of women's natural biological function. Examples of these include Thomas Brown's *A Legacy for the Ladies* (1705), James Bland's *An Essay in Praise of Women* (1733), and James Nelson's *An Essay on the*

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[78] *E.C.L.*, p.8.
[79] Armstrong and Tennenhouse, op.cit., pp.4-5.
[80] *E.C.L.*, p.60.

Government of Children (1753).[81] Dales distinguishes conduct literature as a form which has always had its roots in Christian teaching: she treats it as a singular corpus of literature, united in its historical association with devotional writing, and possessed of a common purpose. The conclusions drawn concerning the way fiction echoes the advice and domestic arrangements advocated by conduct literature, especially that which delineates the roles of mothers and children, cover over and simplify an intricate web of representations in fiction and instructive writing of the period. As we have seen, there were, even on a superficial level, presentations of the domestic arena in fiction which strained against their counterparts in contemporaneous domestic conduct literature.

In conclusion, fiction did not simply and completely register the natural roles of women as they were prescribed by the literature of conduct. What do not appear to have attracted much critical attention are some of the subtle ways in which conduct literature was constructed in response to the bio-medical sciences and how, in a complex way, this contributed to corresponding imaginative explorations of the woman's body within fiction. Ironically, it is the same arguments, showing how fiction had its roots in the domestic conduct book, which also suggest that fiction is doing very different things by representing maternity in certain ways. An emerging field of biological inquiry produced a need for a distinctive code of natural conduct, especially for women, whose natural nurturing qualities were visibly identified, and were qualities of primary importance to a society acutely aware of its need to produce a labour force. Simultaneously, this corpus of literature drew attention to the need to adopt natural behaviour, to the undisclosed anatomical images which sustained these codes, and to inherent contradictions in the idea of a mother's natural purity.

There were hidden anxieties linked with these factors. This is ironic, considering that the laying-open of the female anatomy could be seen as a move towards clearer understanding of the human condition and origins, and as a scientific progression which served to de-mystify the mother's body. Uncertainty surrounding the

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[81] Thomas Brown, *A Legacy for the Ladies*, (London, 1705); James Bland, *An Essay in Praise of Women*, (London, 1733); *E.G.*

discovery of certain functions and features of the female body fueled many conflicting claims about the detrimental effects of the mother's body on her child. Attempts were also made to establish the effects of her imagination upon the sex and 'monstrous' development of her child, and the mysterious way in which her body provided foetal nourishment, and whether or not the foetus could speak. These effects were explained with scientific authority because of bio-medical findings. New mythologies concerning maternity were created by them. Uncertainties which remained within biological theory itself, together with those which were augmented by the methods of its dissemination into popular culture, contributed to a complex and ironic sense of mystification surrounding the relationship between the bodies and natures of mother and child. It was within the imaginative space afforded by fiction that these uncertainties surrounding the biology of maternity were explored. These will be the focus for the second half of this Chapter.

v. Motherless Protagonists.

Numerous novels of the period repeated a pattern of introducing motherless protagonists, young women whose biological mothers, good and bad, had died when their child was at a very young age. The question which this raises in the context of my study is why, when conduct literature so directly advocated mothering as a natural occupation for women, were there so few examples of this within eighteenth-century fiction? Mothers who were present within fiction will be discussed in a later Chapter: here, I want to suggest that the mother's absence was neither arbitrary, nor in keeping with the medical idealisation of the maternal role.

Wollstonecraft's fictional mother of Mary, (also rather confusingly called Mary), Miss Betsy Thoughtless, Defoe's Moll, Charlotte Lennox's Arabella, and Sarah Scott's Cornelia all grow up without the help of their biological mothers.[82] Many of the

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[82] Wollstonecraft, Mary ; Haywood, *Betsy,* ; *M.F.*; Charlotte Lennox, *The Female Quixote*, 1752; M. Dalziel, Ed. (Oxford, 1989): Scott, *Cornelia.*

inhabitants of *Millenium Hall* (1762), Scott's best known and most reprinted novel, including Miss Mancel, Lady Mary Jones, Harriot Selvyn, and Miss Trentharris, are also motherless.[83] These inhabitants of Scott's idealised female retreat are made motherless between the ages of three days and twelve years old. In the case of Henry Fielding's *Amelia* (1751), Mrs Bennett's mother dies when her daughter is sixteen, whilst in Haywood's *History of Jenny and Jemmy Jessamy* (1753) - a work full of Haywoodian questioning of early marriage and motherhood - Miss M. and 'Celia of the Woods' are both made motherless in infancy.[84]

Each of Burney's works of fiction - *Evelina*, *Cecilia* (1782), *Camilla* (1796), and *The Wanderer* (1814) - also provides an instance of absent or deceased mothers for whom men are substitutes: every one of her young female protagonists has been educated by, and is under the care of, men who are in some way safely connected with the Church. Camilla's mother, Mrs Tyrold, is the only exception to this, yet even she is geographically distanced from her daughters throughout this work until marriage matches have been established. *The Wanderer* makes the moral insinuation inherent in this pattern quite clear-cut.[85] Evelina, in Burney's first novel, is under the supervision of Rev. Villars. Juliet, in her last, has a Bishop for a guardian, and it is his status which, when it is exposed at the end of the novel, serves to confirm Juliet's moral uprightness as she explains to Harleigh about her clandestine marriage.[86] This does not seem to be an expression of the need for a 'father figure' who represented external structure and control in a patriarchal society, as Gonda has suggested in her work on the father-figure in mid- and late-eighteenth-century fiction.[87] The thematic associations between such substitutions, and notions of maternal behaviour, were too insistent. Authorial comment upon the 'real' character of Lady Westhaven, whose example guides the motherless Emmeline in Charlotte Smith's popular novel of the same name, emphasizes this

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[83] Scott, *Millenium Hall*, 1762; intr. Jane Spencer, (London, 1986).
[84] H. Fielding, *Amelia*, 1751; D. Blewett, Ed. (Harmondsworth, 1987), pp.269; Haywood, *The History of Jenny and Jemmy Jessamy*, (London, 1753), I, 261; II, 229.
[85] Burney, *The Wanderer*
[86] Ibid. p.699.
[87] Gonda, op.cit., pp.23-24.

theme.[88] Lady Westhaven becomes a model of feminine virtue expressly because of her mother's absence: after her death, "now unrepressed by the severity of her mother", Lady Westhaven is able to progress, and provides an example of virtuous behaviour.[89]

The graphically didactic presentation of a mother and her generative role also resembled presentations of the mother in novels with chiefly female protagonists. In much eighteenth-century fiction, the character of the mother was entirely absent from the narrative, or else it made brief appearances in displays of violent or sexually 'disordered' behaviour. The mothers of both Harry and Ned in Henry Brooke's *The Fool of Quality* (1765-1770), for instance, beat their children with all the vigour they can muster.[90] Ned remarks that he was given "a beating for every hour in the day" because his mother "had no prayers to teach" him.[91] This equation between mothers and heathens is reiterated in Thomas Day's *Sandford and Merton* (1783-1789), a work whose title-page makes the surprising claim that it is intended for children.[92] Here, Mrs Merton, like Harry's mother, fails to acknowledge the good-natured, benevolent character which distinguishes a child: benevolence is simply attributed to the child alone. Tommy's bipartite identification with the figure of Christ is restated by means of his embodying a saintly "transcendent brightness" and his presentation as a shepherd.[93]

Diderot, who claims, in *An Eulogy of Richardson* (1762), that "He is my guide almost without my being aware of it", pushed to the limit ideas explored in *Clarissa.* These concern a perilous world which subverts a biologically-authenticated prescription of maternal nurture.[94] Diderot's *La Réligieuse* (1760) provides a fitting description of a mother's dissociation from the qualities of virtue and purity: in the cases of other young

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[88] Charlotte Smith, *Emmeline*, 1788; intr. Z. Fairbairns, (London, 1987).
[89] Ibid. p.364.
[90] *F.Q.*, I, 47.
[91] *F.Q.*, II, 163.
[92] T. Day, . . *History.* Writers such as Wollstonecraft and Reeve, and more recently, Gonda, accept this definition of *Sandford and Merton* as a children's book, despite its remarkable similarity to adult fiction such as *F.Q.* In addition, numerous examples of literature aimed at the children's market offer evidence of concessions to less-experienced readers by means of their style and content: *Sandford and Merton* does not do this. I can only surmise that Day's reasons for insisting upon this intended audience may have been because he intended for his book to be read to children, or that he wanted to tap a highly lucrative market. This trend for literature for children is discussed more fully with relation to adult conduct literature in Chapter Two.
[93] *F.Q.*, I, 72; T. Day, *History.*, II, 233.
[94] Denis Diderot, *Thoughts on Art and Style*, 1762; Tr. Bridget L. Tollemache, (London, 1893), p 251.

women in these novels these are perpetually affirmed through a variety of displays and assurances of a woman's religious conviction.[95] In Diderot's novel, a young novice relates the story of her life in the convent. She describes a friend named Susan, who calls the Mother Superior "Satan" because of her less-than-holy vigorous sexual activity with the young novices and nuns, to whom she refers as her "children."[96]

At other times in the selection of narrative fiction I have explored, a mother's existence was only referred to when blame was attributed to her for a child's faults or education. Brooke insists upon the contagious nature of a mother's body. Impurities which are 'caught', like a disease, from the mother, lead to the damnation of her offspring. Miss Forward and her schoolfriend, Miss Betsy Thoughtless, acquire their coquettish behaviour from "the good governess" who, in the place of their mothers, "truly loved" them. The "unpardonable Neglect" demonstrated by Miss Grove's mother, and the pride which she, like Lady Mary Jones in *Millenium Hall* "inherited" from her, lead to a moral ruin with the sort of sinister undertones which surround Miss Forward's disposal of her second illegitimate child.[97] Even amid the relatively liberal rhetoric of Scott's *Millenium Hall* - in which the natural mother of one illegitimate child not only survives in secret, but lives, albeit briefly, to be called "an example of virtue" - Mrs Alworth's lack of care and concern for her own son extends to her failing either to notice or to contend with her husband: he removes their eighteen-month-old to Bath, far away from her sphere of influence.[98]

More threatening still was the extreme to which another of Richardson's admirers, Donatien Alphonse Francois, the Marquis de Sade, imaginatively protracted this theme of the child's fanatical indulgence in sensually gratifying behaviour as a result of having had a 'sexually sinful' mother.[99]Justine, de Sade's ill-fated fifteen-year-old heroine, undertakes a journey in pursuit of virtue. Like her predecessor Clarissa, despite successive instances of brutal sexual exploitation, she manages to maintain a

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[95] Diderot, *Memoirs of a Nun*, 1796; Tr. Frances Birrell, (London, 1959).
[96] Ibid. pp.14, 168.
[97] Haywood, *Betsy*, pp.10, 81; Lennox, *Quixote*, p.7; Scott, *Hall*, p.125.
[98] Scott, *Hall*, pp.173, 197.
[99] Sade, Donatien Alphonse Francois, Marquis de, *Justine*, 1787; Tr. A.H. Watson, (London, 1964).

large degree of optimism concerning her future and the natures of those with whom she contends. Finally, however, her miserable lot is ended by a bolt of lightning. Early in the sequence of these events Justine meets a fictional Marquis by accidentally stumbling onto his land. His declaration that "the female breast nourishes, maintains, and helps build the child, but in reality it furnishes nothing" challenges the view of de Sade's mentor concerning a concept of natural maternity heavily indebted to biological information emerging from the European medical world.[100] The brutal and plainly sexually-orientated treatment which Justine receives at his hands is in keeping with numerous other fictional instances in which a child's sensual sin is attributed to maternal influence. Effectively, because his mother fed him as a child, the view of the Marquis is proven by his actions.

The suggestion made by the charged absence of biological mothers in eighteenth-century fiction was that physical contact with a mother entailed the inheritance of sins of appetite from her. In a sense, the idea of a natural mother became synonymous, in these novels, with the dangerous moral territory of her body. What was natural, it seemed, meant the appetite, something which Locke urged should be controlled.[101] In conjunction with some forms of maternal substitution, her contagious moral impurity and her heathen influence were epitomised by the distance which was emphatically placed between mother and child. The mother's body was suffused with traditional doctrinal and culturally-determined views of the child and female adulthood which located the corruption of the individual in earthly experience. Along with this interpretation of pictures and ideas depicting the natural female reproductive capacity in terms of animal appetite, however, literary invention sought to express another strain of ideological meanings which accorded with ideas of a natural maternal role. What was natural and biologically proven unsettled the self-conscious writer's concern for representing, as closely as possible, what was true to life. Eighteenth-century fiction projected two incompatible and conflicting voices, one explicit, and the other implicit.

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[100] Ibid. p.136.

[101] John Locke, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, 1690; John W. and Jean S. Yolton, Eds. (Oxford, 1989), pp.142-143.

vi. Fictional Unease and the Mother Figure.

In Chapter One, I suggested that eighteenth-century medical texts depicted maternal behaviour, and stressed the mother's very important role in relation to her child, and thus to society, through semantic changes, and also by the manner in which pictures of her unborn child conformed so closely to symbols which denoted the ideals of eighteenth-century moral philosophy. The child's proximity to its mother, and her role in relation to this, were depicted through the metaphorical migration of similar 'pictures'. Obvious similarity exists between those portrayed within explicit medical writing, and works of fiction such as Brooke's *The Fool of Quality.* Here, the young hero Harry's good nature, fostered by 'maternal' nurture;

> ... thus knits into one family and weaves into one web the affinity and brotherhood of all mankind.[102]

Conversely, 'bad' mothers engendered morally degenerate traits in their children. The second reason why this diagrammatic presentation has bearing upon its migration to, or repetition in, narrative fiction, is that these pictures provided visible proof of biological intimacy. The importance during the period of returning to the body for visible evidence of certain qualities of feeling and of innate and morally admirable qualities is stressed by Roy and Dorothy Porter's point that "the physical was an index of the spiritual, moral, and personal."[103] Such evidence is epitomised - and rendered ironic - by the fictional character of Will Honeycomb, who becomes absorbed in the appearance of a young woman at the theatre, in the first volume of *The Spectator* (1711). Her goodness and her chastity are confirmed by her physical appearance. Honeycomb is

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[102] *F.Q.*, I, 140.

[103] John Mullan, *Sentiment and Sociability*, (Oxford, 1988), p.228; Roy and Dorothy Porter, *In Sickness and in Health*, (London, 1988), p.45.

certain of her total moral uprightness because her face and body present her inner 'self'on view:

> BEHOLD, you who dare, that charming Virgin. Behold the Beauty of her Person chastised by the Innocence of her Thoughts. Chastity, Good-Nature, and Affability, she knows she is good. Conscious Beauty adorned with conscious Virtue! .... How is The Whole Woman expressed in her appearance![104]

Pictures of mother and child which fascinated the anatomists producing medical discourse also manifested themselves in novels of the period; images were built up in the narrative fiction through verbal depictions of the domestic arena. Predictably, however, the 'migration' of pictures of their confluence was not straightforward. The womb itself, as we have seen, would have been considered an indelicate subject for the attention of female readers, and this may be why metaphorical representations of mother and child explored the natural maternal role, and the process of feeding the newborn infant. Attention shifted from the uterus to the breast, a leap which is less surprising in the light of anatomists' beliefs that the two were internally connected.[105]

Brooke's *The Fool of Quality* , however, provides an exception to the pattern of introducing a mother and newly-born or very young infant. Several images of the gravid uterus are employed as vehicles through which a didactic retelling of Biblical history, the fall in Eden, and Christ's redemption, is made possible. The womb is suffused with infection, and is the site of sexually-related evil which is harmful to those who come into contact with it. Mrs Neighbourly sets the scene in the fourth volume: women's urgent need for sensual, and especially sexual gratification, necessitates their possession of a moral conscience. A woman's physical form embodies "inclinations", "affections" and "desires" (IV, 65). Christian doctrine is transcribed through the

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[104] *Spectator*, I (No. 4), (1711), 24.

[105] See Ephraim Chambers, *Cyclopaedia, Or, An Universal Dictionary of Arts and Sciences*, 1727-1730; 2nd ed., (London, 1738-1754), I, for current scientific explanation of the intimate physiological links between womb and breast. Chambers states that, after the birth of a child, "that blood which before flowed to the foetus, and for three or four days afterwards by the uterus, beginning then to stop, does little more dilate the mammilary glands."

traditional associative use of the body. A promise of immortality which comes with death is conveyed by an image of birth itself. The pure inner self must manage to dissociate itself from earthly things which are represented by the corrupting womb:

> ... when the midwife death shall deliver us from the dark womb of our woful travail and mortality, we shall immediately spring forth into incorruption and glory! (IV, 301).

In complete contrast to analogous 'pictures' of the gravid uterus in the medical texts, the sinless child and dangerous woman's body are polarised here: moreover, whilst the child's status is interchangeable with the status of Christ, and his comparable merit, its mother's generative function exemplifies precisely the opposite to the nurturing picture of benevolence which was related to the womb, and to representations of maternity. Harry alone, the Christ-like child, takes on the role of socialising benevolence in this novel. Using language which equates the mother's body with innate desires, Mr Fenton explains this need for self-denial to Harry:

> ... it [benevolent love] must break through the dark and narrow womb of self, into sentiments and feelings of GOODWILL for others, before this child of GOD can be born into the world (IV, 87).

Self-interest is, in Shaftesbury's words, "inconsistent with the Interest of the Publick"; thus it must, he continues, be considered "an ill and vitious Affection."[106] St Belial's comment makes the idea of the woman's body as a highly contagious and risky moral territory clear: maternity is equated with sexual knowledge, and the Christian doctrine of the Fall from Eden (V, 80). He claims that he has been infected with the devil from his biological mother, and even that this connection has killed his innocent nurse:

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[106] Shaftesbury, Anthony Ashley Cooper, third Earl of, *An Inquiry Concerning Virtue, or Merit*, I (No. ii), p 13.

> If there are devils, I surely had one before I saw the light, and was filled with the evil spirit from my mother's womb; insomuch that my nurse died of a cancer in her breast, occasioned by the envenomed bites I gave her nipple with my toothless gums while she suckled me (V, 80).

Despite the apparent recourse to a feminine stereotype which was suffused with moral meaning in this treatment of maternity, my suspicion is that what was explicitly conveyed through the pictures of the gravid uterus in the medical texts was implicitly echoed in narrative fiction in a manifold way. Curiosity about what was a growing field of 'proven' natural history needed to be explored in this fiction. What is suggested here is a more interesting puzzle than a simple, dichotomous view of respect and simultaneous disgust for the mother's body, which characterised the traditional Christian attitude towards maternity, and which was exemplified by the symbols of The Virgin and Eve.[107] *The Fool of Quality* explicitly adheres to a dualistic Christian view of ideas about the natural role of the mother. Significantly, however, the depiction of the person assigned to nurture the young children in this text appears to be indebted to images and related medical theories of the gravid uterus. We discover that Harry has been abandoned by a cruel heathen mother at an early age, yet despite the absence of his natural mother, the idea of maternal goodness and her suitability for the task of nurturing and rearing her child are explored in indirect ways: her body may be absent, but a distinctly female maternal presence is examined by means of bodily substitutions, as will become clear.

What biological enquiry deemed natural and good challenged the traditional Christian moral view of the mother's sexual body, which was either absented, or explicitly moralised. Implicit in a complex network of images, however, was some sense of a more secular expression of maternity, one which was unambiguous in its celebration of the mother's vital role. At this stage, however, another apparent similarity between conduct literature and fiction is also worth some attention. This is

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[107] See Marina Warner, *Alone of All Her Sex*, 1976; new ed., (London, 1990), especially pp.121-176. Also, for a view which conflicts with my findings, which is that religious fiction was distinctly different from sentimental fiction, see *E.C.L.*, p.6.

how Christian and cultural ideas concerned with the child's province and the woman's body insisted upon ways of separating mother and child throughout eighteenth-century fiction. Despite this, within the same novels women and children were often briefly located together. Unlike the conduct literature, however, this collocation did not serve as an indication of the ambiguous and lesser natural status of both, but typically suggested that the mother's body was the source of the richest human qualities.

During this period children were to some extent distinguished as a special group by their clothes, their own special literature and expectations of their behaviour.[108] Undercurrent connotations of the maternal body with the sexual issue also insisted upon the denial of physical contact between mother and child; meanings associated with each were polarised.[109] This need for separation, for placing distance between them, was repeatedly emphasized throughout fiction in ways which were less direct than Brooke's metaphors of womb and birth, but which sustained the risky moral meaning surrounding the mother's body.

Mary Douglas's assertion that the concept of a polluted object necessarily requires prohibition of physical contact with what is considered either clean, pure, or sacred may help to explain why images in fiction which associated disease and moral corruption with a mother's generative capacity demanded the withdrawal of her body from the infant's domain.[110] In one sense, images of the child and mother together figuratively represent the dualistic notion upon which Christian dogma is largely founded. Dualism, or the separate co-existence of physical and spiritual, necessarily leads to a certain amount of scorn for the body and indeed some Christians attached great importance to acts which acknowledge the superiority of the pious soul to the physical.[111] Donald Davie points out the relevance of this during a period when growing numbers of Dissenting Christians were drawing what he calls "inconceivable" masochistic interpretations from Biblical examples of self-denial![112] Christian doctrine

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[108] Philippe Ariés, *Centuries of Childhood*, 1960; Tr. R. .Baldick, (Harmondsworth, 1986), p.388.
[109] Ibid. p.388.
[110] Mary Douglas, *Implicit Meanings*, (London, 1975), especially pp.47-59.
[111] Ariés, *Images of Man and Death*, (London, 1985), p.36; R. and D. Porter, op.cit., p.61.
[112] Donald Davie, *A Gathered Church*, (London, 1978), p.36.

has always focussed upon the body, but it was of particular significance to the Dissenters, and those influenced by the cultural absorption of their ideas during this period.

Meanings which were bound up with managing and controlling the body overlapped with those which emerged through current changes in the cultural regard for children. It was out of this context that narrative fiction evolved as a means of imaginatively exploring and expressing the nature of young women reaching an age fraught with uncertainty when childhood gives way to the physical maturity of adulthood. The medical texts, however, seemed to be producing a new form of secular icon, a representation of maternity which embodied, in part, fragments of other depictions of femininity. In doing so, they provided a paradoxical sense of the infringement of religious codes.

As we have already seen, the medical mother was at times rendered asexual, her organs of reproduction being figuratively distanced from her womb.[113] In this way in particular, she challenged the Eve figure. The physician Robert Bland, for instance, launches a scathing attack on the Christian assumption that a woman's pelvis is formed to punish her for Eve's 'sexual sin'. Bland is adamant that the biological explanation for the shape of the human pelvis is very different from this traditional religious one:

> This is beautiful in poetry. But that the structure of the human pelvis was changed to induce laborious parturition, is not very philosophical to assert, and requires no common degree of credulity to believe.[114]

Biological evidence suggested, to some observers at least, that life might not be the trial which had been so much a part of the fabric of centuries of cultural tradition.

Narrative fiction was producing 'pictures' of mother and child which reflected the ways in which Art was substituting for the iconic representation of the Virgin the grown child in isolation.[115] That the child was beginning to evolve a special distinct

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[113] See Couper, op.cit., p.17.
[114] R. Bland, op.cit., p.17.
[115] Ariés, *Childhood*, p.104.

province was voiced by Burney's heroine, Camilla, in a nostalgic and sentimental question in the first few pages of *Camilla*:

> O blissful state of innocence, purity, and delight, why must it fleet so fast? why scarcely but by retrospection is its happiness known?[116]

In the apparent absence of mothers in those novels which witness the space of time leading up to a young woman's marriage, we detect the need to separate woman and child. Still more questions are raised by this. Was she absent because she was very important, or because her role was irrelevant? Did her absence simply forward the novel's action? Because the fictional action was in many cases mobilised by the 'extraction' of the young woman from a familiar context in order that she could work out her own salvation, it may have been that the mother had to be removed because she provided that all-important context. Conversely, it could be that she had to be removed because she impeded her children's progress towards moral perfection. Her absence existed, however, as part of a network of equally ambiguous representations of maternity which, within the same texts, provided an anxious sense of her importance.

vi. Male Surrogate Mothers in Fiction.

Biological findings concerned with a woman's role in the generation of new human life, and a linked emerging concept of 'naturalness' and physicality, were also investigated in the narrative fiction of the same period. The maternal physical presence, as was shown above, was strikingly absent from many examples of the fiction of the period. In spite of this, there are several instances within these fictions of the male body, amongst other surrogates, acting as its substitute. Carol Houlihan Flynn has noted that there existed during the eighteenth century a strong cultural fear of wet-nursing, and a corresponding fascination with surrogacy.[117] What I want to add to this is that, in the light of

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[116] Burney, *Camilla*, 1796; E.A. .Bloom and L.D. Bloom, Eds. (Oxford, 1989), p.13.
[117] Carol Houlihan Flynn, *The Body in Swift and Defoe*, (Cambridge, 1990), p.73.

similarities between 'pictures' of maternity in medical texts, and images of surrogacy in narrative fiction, the interest in these substitutes lay in the way they represented maternity itself. Shown in close proximity with the young child, surrogates adopted maternal postures and roles by providing the infant with constant companionship and by feeding him or her, both literally and by abstract symbolic means. In these ways, maternal substitutes facilitated the imaginative investigation of a newly-emerging female biological role which was contemporaneously under scrutiny in the anatomist's theatre, especially during the second and third quarters of the eighteenth century.

In an earlier Chapter we saw how the communion between mother and child presented in a body of medical writings conformed with images and a sense of maternal nurture in Shaftesbury's delineation of a social system based upon mutual harmony and benevolence.[118] In some examples of the fiction of the period, symbolic meaning concerned with the nurture and feeding of the child were also implicitly acknowledged as the mother's domain. It was also important, although unsurprising to the modern reader, that stress was placed upon the exclusively feminine quality of this role. In the next part of this Chapter, I argue that, in the absence of women who were biologically related to children within certain texts, male substitutes, as well as nurses, and women who were entirely unrelated to the child, were employed as vehicles through whom the biological maternal role was explored.

Fiction can be seen as tentatively helping to shape the sociological change amongst those social groups whose reliance upon nurses and semi-solid infant feeding practices had been considerable.[119] In contrast to the many reports about the heel-dragging pace of social change in this area, within eighteenth-century fiction the total care and nurture of infants was an activity which was specifically feminine. Only the mother's body could provide the necessary nutrients for the growing child. Discussions

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[118] Shaftesbury, op.cit.

[119] See trends documented by social historians such as Lawrence Stone, *The Family. Sex and Marriage*, 1977; 2nd ed, (Harmondsworth, 1979), p.176, and primary sources such as the debate in *G.M.*, XXII (1752), 509.

of breastfeeding in the literature of conduct told a woman that her body was ordained to feed her own child just as it did before the child's birth. Although there exist a few medical accounts of newborns receiving all manner of food, including roast pork, a physical connection between womb and breast was well documented. Breastfeeding was even described as an extension of the mysterious but fundamental umbilical provision: some of its medical advocates described blood re-routing within the mother's body, in order to be supplied as breastmilk.[120] We learn that only the woman's breast can provide an infant with adequate nourishment.[121] An overlap between what I have referred to earlier in this Chapter and elsewhere as conduct literature which explicitly seeks to teach women a biologically-justified role, and narrative fiction, was provided by the natural role which conduct literature constructed and which was explored through fictional representation.

The need for, and desirability of, maternal tenderness is voiced in *Sandford and Merton* as Tommy tests out Mr Barlow's claim that a mother will naturally protect her child. The young boy watches a pig and her piglets on the farm, noting that, in the case of one distressed piglet, "his mother, hearing his cries, very naturally came to his assistance" (I, 128). Likewise, Mr Meekly's description of the manner in which his arms "encircled" his daughter Louisa evokes the intimate physical closeness which is exhibited by a protective and nurturing mother bird; he tells Mr Fenton that "my soul brooded over her, as the wings of a turtle [turtle dove] over her new-begotten" (V, 187). These words amount to a confession by Mr Meekly: he has taken on a maternal role.

Mothers remained unrepresented, metaphorically speaking, in the flesh, yet their absence was lamented in ways which implied that, ideologically at least, what Mr Trusty calls the "tender mother" was celebrated.[122] The need for a mother was acknowledged in the formal rhetoric of several novels. Lady Melvyn, it seems, temporarily embodies such a figure. After an early death, she is extolled as having been, albeit briefly, "the best of mothers"; her daughter's subsequent need to seek out

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[120] See footnote 105.
[121] *E.N.M.C.*, p.18.
[122] Haywood, *Betsy*, p.178.

"an affection quite maternal" at school may be informed by Sarah Fielding's initial address to Mrs Poyntz, in *The governess* (1749). Here, Mrs Teachum decides upon the substance of her classes for girls according to their future natural female roles.[123] One core concern, "maternal Care", is stressed as the "first and chief Study" of every married woman, and as such it is an appropriate quality to encourage in every pupil. Another apparent contradiction exists in this text between this sort of acknowledgement with its positive promotion of maternal qualities, and the corresponding absence of a biological mother. It is especially interesting that Scott should have treated the issue of maternity with such reverence because of the commitment to marriage which must have been assumed alongside it. Like Haywood's heroines who often voice their reticence about the married state, yet imply their approval of it by their pseudo-maternal behaviour, Scott also applauds motherhood and marriage. By way of contradiction, however, Millenium Hall is itself an idealised environment in which women of some means can live without the necessity of marriage and the likely resultant production of children. The answer to my earlier question surely lies in part here; mothers are absent because they are important. Their importance is fundamental in the familiar context, when the fictional young woman finds herself outside the protection of a family.

Several ways in which eighteenth-century medical discourse expressed and emphasized the close physical communion between a mother's body and that of her child in correlation with a linguistic framework, was shown in an earlier Chapter. Together, these sustained and produced a very positive biological interpretation of 'maternalness'. The meaning which this newly-emerging field of enquiry afforded the woman's generative and maternal roles appeared to manifest itself again in narrative fiction. As well as other complementary means, the imaginative portrayal of male guardians in the narrative fiction was central to this. In an indirect way, the concept of maternal affection and protectiveness was attributed to some fathers and male guardians. This has been mildly suggested in the illustration, earlier in this Chapter, of

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[123] Scott, *Hall*, p.32; Sarah Fielding, *The Governess*, 1749; intr. Mary Cadogan, (London, 1987), Address to Mrs Poyntz.

Mr Meekly's fostering of Louisa (V, 187). Here, in the place of the real mother's body, there is another body. Apart from this change of 'shape', the representations of maternity are remarkably similar to those within the medical discourse. In keeping with this male replacement and embodiment of maternal qualities, Arabella draws a close parallel between the role of mothering, and its 'paternal' expression. She likens her father's death to the loss of the "soft Cares, and tender Indulgences, of a Mother's Fondness."[124] As late as the last decade of the eighteenth century, we find the "guiding care" which Camilla attributes to Mrs Tyrold actually manifested by Rev. Tyrold's letters, messages of advice, and moral counsel addressed to his daughter.[125] Her mother, for the main part of the work, remains a figure in the background who conforms to the conduct book prescriptions of a modest woman. She principally demonstrates her female worth through her silence and removal from all events outside the family home.

In Brooke's *The Fool of Quality*, this pattern of putting a male in the place and role of a mother produces an especially powerful example of the implicit exploration of meanings associated with 'maternalness'. In each of its five volumes, a picture of the close physical contact which has become a hallmark within medical discourse symbolising the close generative and nurturing relationship between mother and child, is restated. In every case an adult male is shown "tenderly .... clasping", and "warmly pressing", a young child "to his bosom" (I, 165, 195; II, 208). This is not a patriarchal call for the recognition of a father's role: such an act echoes the explicitly female, maternal response to her child's needs. Paradoxically, Mr Fenton himself insists that this capacity for feeding and nurturing a child is exclusively feminine as he duplicates the symbolic, mutually-entwining vessels and barely-separable bodies observed and recorded by the medical investigators (III, 4). Mr Fenton is unequivocal about the site identified as the source of such "impressions"of "social attachment": it is, he tells Mr Clinton, the female breast:

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[124] Lennox, op.cit., p.59.
[125] Burney, *Camilla*, p.896.

> ... he [the child] is fostered in her bosom; he is nourished with her substance, and he imbibes into his being the sweetness of humanity with the milk of his mother (I, 89).

The breast at which Harry, Diana, Louisa, and Mr Grace's two infants find themselves is also a male one.[126] In each case child and father, grandfather, or foster-father, are shown in close physical contact, the child pressed to the adult's breast. The complete communion between the two is re-emphasized by the fixed eye-contact which, it is stressed, is unfailingly maintained (I, 92; III, 274). One of the most vivid instances of this is in the first volume, where the depiction of Harry and Mr Fenton relies heavily upon language which denotes breastfeeding, and which apparently deliberately evokes this idea of succour:

> ... he beheld his patron as his father and as his God, [and] would hang upon his knee, look up to his face, delighted, and greedily imbibe the sweetness of those lessons (I, 55).

The only exception to the male exclusivity of these 'feeding' and 'nurturing' images is Harry's nurse who, like these paternal and other male figures, nurtures Harry "in her bosom" (I, 159). As the practice of putting children out to nurse was on the decline at this time, Harry's habit of referring to his nursemaid as his "mammy" reinforces this pattern of substitutions which dissociate the natural mother's body from the child's intimate embrace.[127]

The Methodist John Wesley was so impressed by Brooke's work that he undertook to produce a much abridged version of the story under the new title of *The History of Henry Moreland* (1781). Wesley's revision of what he called Brooke's "whimsical" title, and his selection of material from the original five volumes into just two, provides us with an insight into what he considered most important within the

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[126] *F.Q.*, I, 55, 95, 165; II, 208, (Harry); III, 274, (Diana); V, 187, (Louisa); V, 187, (Mr Grace).

[127] L. Stone, op.cit., pp.269-272. Also see Chapter One for accounts of the *G.M.* discussion of breastfeeding trends, and *F.Q.*, II, 188, for Mr Fenton's complaint against the practice of wet-nursing. For substitution, see *F.Q.*, V, 12.

original work.[128] Many of the tales which provide exhaustive illustrations of Harry's and Richard's education were omitted from these condensed volumes. In the treatment of male adoptive 'parents', however, Wesley even embellished the idea of maternal attachment to the child by emphasizing a sense of tenderness between man and child which Mr Meekly calls "instinct."[129] Wesley reinforced the sense of maternal facilitation of her child's needs by using the metaphor of "a foetus within the womb of the mother" in order to describe the educational process which produced a merchant class within a "general state or constitution."[130] These examples can hardly be interpreted as a call for maternal substitutes. Instead, they suggest a preoccupation with society's perception of the biological mother, and the merit of her role.

vii. Half A Mother. Female Surrogates.

I have claimed that physical evidence of mothers was absent in the fiction with which this Chapter is concerned. Female characters, however, with major roles to play at times adopted partial maternal roles, with children not naturally their own. There was also another problematic network of images of child and woman within narrative fiction. Sometimes the fully-grown female body was temporarily located within the child's province. This seemed to a lign these female characters with a child's status. Women fleetingly imitated the maternal role. This often served as evidence of their benevolent natures. Women also used child-like gestures and actual infant bodies, in order to prevent the 'exposure' of sexual knowledge and sexual awareness by their telling bodies. At times, then, female characters were depicted both as temporary mothers, and temporary children in order to prove their virtue. There are two questions which I want to explore in the next few pages with relation to these roles. The first is how women's fictional 'momentary motherhood' relates to and sustains my point about maternity being represented in experimental ways in fiction. The second is how this

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[128] John Wesley, *The History of Henry Earl of Moreland*, (London, 1781), Address to the Reader.
[129] Ibid. I, 33.
[130] Ibid. I, 40.

corresponding location of women as children related to domestic organisation as it was prescribed in conduct literature. Could it have been a means of testing out conflicts concerning the nature of women in relation to biological findings within conduct literature?

The adoption, by coquettish Miss Betsy Thoughtless and her friend Miss Mabel, of a laundrywoman's orphaned newborn daughter provides yet another example of this tentative 'identification' of women with children.[131] Haywood's novel bristles with comment about the effects upon children of having lost a mother or, worse still, having an unsuitable one. Even in the light of this, only a child *or* its mother is shown at any one time. They are never present together. Against this backdrop, maternal behaviour is explored in conjunction with demonstrations of Christian social goodwill epitomised by Miss Mabel and Miss Betsy. Miss Mabel publicly declares herself "half a mother": she is questioned about the "motherly part she had been playing."[132] In this role, the primary function of each partner is to provide a wet-nurse for the baby. In accordance with this, the two friends set about finding one who behaves in a similar way to a biological mother.[133] Dr Cadogan's popular advice concerning the matching of a nurse as closely as possible to the "more natural" nurturing qualities of the biological mother is carefully adhered to [134]. Goody Bushman's own sons are duly inspected. Their "rosy" faces, as they sit eating huge chunks of bread beside her, are evidence indeed of their mother's nurturing capability. The two adoptive mothers provide for 'their' daughter's needs in this indirect way.[135] By undertaking to search for a nurse who will behave towards 'their' little girl in a way which reduplicates the child's own biological mother, the two young women demonstrate and verbally affirm their own experimental maternal roles.

A brief glance at some of Haywood's other writings shows how this theme was something of a preoccupation for the author. The fourth volume of the *Female*

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[131] Haywood, *Betsy*, pp..219-220.
[132] Ibid. p.372.
[133] Ibid. p.372.
[134] *E.N.M.C.*, p.34-36.
[135] Haywood, *Betsy*, p.252.

Spectator (1744-1746) presents a worthy mother-in-law tending her deceased son's children instead of remarrying, but it is the first volume which offers a tale not only surprisingly candid for this periodical but also strongly recommending adoption as a means to salvation.[136] Elements of this story prefigure that of Miss Betsy and Miss Mabel, and it is worth noting at this point that its three principle characters are closer to the fictional representations of Haywood's later novel than they are to other characters in other moral tales within the periodical. Their names announce the most obvious difference: that each does not simply represent a single human characteristic or quality as characters, hence their inclusion here in a discussion of fiction. In the story, Alithea learns of the unfaithfulness of her husband Dorimon, and that her sister Melissa has given the resulting child away to a nurse in the country who accepted fifty guineas for her costs. Alithea immediately seeks out the nurse, who imagines she has come to her for the disposal of yet another illegitimate child. Haywood reports that Alithea takes the adoption a step further than Miss Betsy and Miss Mabel, although like them she has carefully chosen a new nurse in the interim:

> This excelling Pattern of Good-Nature and Conjugal Love, took with her the next Day every Thing befitting a Child to wear whom she was determined to make her own by Adoption; and no sooner saw him in his new Nurse's Arms, than she took him, embraced and kiss'd him with a Tenderness little less than maternal.[137]

Once again, however, the exploration of ideas concerned with the mother's body as a biological base is managed at a distance from the child's biological mother.

There was another feature of these novels which overlapped with the ways in which children and women were collocated in eighteenth-century fiction. This, too, helped to render the woman's body less determinate as, in a variety of ways, she strongly identified herself with the young child. She enacted childish postures or adopted child-like behaviour, and sometimes she hid herself using a child's body.

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[136] Haywood, *Female*, IV, 167; I, 243-252.
[137] Ibid. I, 248.

Young women reached for infants and made child-like gestures, and were even depicted within what was shown as a child's domain. Because many of these works of fiction focussed upon an age prior to marriage at which the fully-mature status of the female subject was at times uncertain, these features were open to wide interpretation. The most obvious of them was stated within the novels themselves. Haywood admitted that Miss Betsy's insensitive games had been fostered by a belief that women were supposed to behave like children.[138] Wollstonecraft, too, attributed such behaviour to the expectations placed upon women by society.[139] There may be truth in the view of each writer, but there are further possibilities inherent in the merging of a young woman's physical status with that of a child. Moreover, the uncertainty surrounding the woman's physical size and even her physical status which this produces made a significant contribution to the tensions produced within this selection of eighteenth-century narrative fiction regarding its relationship with medical writings about maternity.

One way of interpreting this might be to see it as a way of merging woman and child still closer together within the domestic environment. It can be seen as being in keeping with medical representations of maternity. In the context of the other means by which this fiction demonstrated ambiguity in its own representations of the mother, however, - through her brief and sanctified appearances, her predominant charged absence, and surrogate behaviour - this kind of enactment adds to the uncertainty surrounding the intricate and inconsistent imaginative interpretation of medical fact here.

Burney's Camilla uses the body of a young child in order to hide the physical manifestation of her sexual jealousy.[140] Edgar Mandlebert seems to confirm Miss Margland's speculation that he is about to ask Indiana to marry him: as Camilla's eyes fill with tears, she denies her response by hiding her face with a baby:

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[138] Haywood, *Betsy*, p.302.
[139] Wollstonecraft, *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, 1792; M. Brody, Ed. (Harmondsworth, 1985), pp.114, 128, 154.
[140] Burney, *Camilla*, p. 151.

> Camilla felt the tears start in her eyes; - she hastily snatched the little babe into her arms; and, while her kisses hid her face, Happy, and thrice happy Indiana! with a soft sigh, was the silent ejaculation of her heart. She seated herself on a stool, and, without speaking or hearing any thing more, devoted herself to the baby.[141]

When Edgar finally proposes marriage to Camilla, her "pure" and modest status is affirmed again by Camilla's recourse to a child-like gesture.[142] In the presence of her sisters, she offers proof of her purity. She is shown "hiding" the blushes which acknowledge her positive attachment "in their bosom." Likewise Arabella, in *The Fool of Quality*, must prove wrong the gossip which surrounds her moral status. In an act which symbolically represents her modest rejection of her body, Arabella covers her face with a handkerchief and, "like an infant", she "gently leaned toward" Mr Fenton, and shed tears upon "his bosom" (I, 241, 259). Later in the same novel, Mr Meekly's description of Louisa's character similarly denotes her moral perfection, by describing her as a child:

> For my Louisa was perpetual festivity to our sight and to our hearts; .... Still varying, yet exhibiting the same delight, like the northern aurora, she shone in all directions. And she sported as though she had gone to heaven, from time to time, and borrowed all her plays from the kingdom of little children (V, 195).

The term 'innocent' - often interchangeable in the eighteenth century with that of 'infant' - is used repeatedly in Eliza Haywood's attempts to exonerate Miss Betsy Thoughtless, when her persistently flirtatious behaviour invites interpretations of moral ambivalence.[143] Evelina, however, is much more direct in the way she employs a child-figure in order to 'extract' herself from the dubious context of a sexually-orientated struggle which could potentially involve rape.[144] Evelina is instantly removed from the

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[141] Ibid. p.151.
[142] Ibid. p.679.
[143] Ibid. pp.21, 23, 28, 30, 33.
[144] Burney, *Evelina*, p. 149.

moral responsibility which Miss Branghton suffers in similar circumstances when she too attracts the attentions of a strange man in a side-street. Evelina immediately claims a child's status: "He was as strong as a lion; I was no more in his hands than a child."[145]

In interplay with these representations of women as children was a physiological 'truth' which London physician Robert Whytt certainly took for granted. Virgins could not be biological mothers, he pointed out, whilst sexually-active women during the eighteenth century usually were.[146] The same anxieties regarding the proven sexual maturity of a mother appear to underlie this location of women with children. Depicting non-mothers within the context of a child's domain echoed the physical affinity between mother and child which was depicted within medical writing; this demonstrated the all-important implicit denial of her sexual function. It may be recalled that a thematically comparable collocation of mother and child in conduct literature indicated unease about the potential of the mother to infect the child with undesirable traits of character. Ironically, this offers another instance of one of the marked differences in treatment of the domestic environment in conduct literature and in narrative fiction.

These instances constantly demonstrate an interchangeability between woman and child which overlay the suggestion voiced by scientific observers of the female body. The biologically-ordained and hence natural feminine role was with children. As writers of fiction imaged and explored a fascination with biological representations of maternity, they exposed a cultural curiosity about, and fear of, female sexuality. This helps to explain why the presence of many natural mothers was denied in eighteenth-century fiction. Women were identified with children because of the way in which the child dispersed any sexual threat. Women whose identity was also that of that of girls could not, by definition, be mothers. Tension was created, and maintained, by suggestions that women should 'naturally' be with children; they had also to adopt child-like postures, and hide behind the least-obviously sexed bodies of children. Ariés

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[145] Ibid. p.149.
[146] Robert Whytt, *Observations*, (London, 1765), p.106.

points out that the eighteenth century, more than any other, saw images of the human body being used to convey the consciousness of self, of an individual's being.[147]

In conclusion: this Chapter has attempted to establish a number of connections between the medical and lay-medical writings of the eighteenth-century, and the concurrent production of narrative fiction. In doing so, it has illuminated eighteenth-century and modern equations between fiction of the period and conduct literature, a form of literature which had close links with the scientific study of the natural function and role of the human body. Incongruities in their depictions of the maternal body and its role betray an unease with the medical idealisation. Moreover, these other similarities between the two forms serve in a sense to contradict their more overt apparent similarities. These are that both provided a means by which a conservative, idealised view of the mother's identity and role - one which is closely akin to the feeling heroine of sensibility - was conveyed to the reader.

I have been claiming that the relationship between narrative fiction of the eighteenth century and bio-medical findings was not a straightforward one: medical ideas of maternity as an essential expression of femininity did not migrate directly into this fiction. I have not found evidence of what Gonda calls a "clear path for ideology, through fiction, to the female consumer" in exploring examples of fiction in which there are only very minor, or no appearances at all, of the biological mother as a character in the plot.[148] Fiction, it appears, was doing something quite different from employing imaginary contexts in which to locate the same direct message as conduct literature concerning the maternal ideal.

What may be inferred from this, and instances of exploring the maternal function through the use of a variety of surrogates, is that the absence of the mother-figure in these fictions was an important one. There were links between conduct literature and narrative fiction which centred around the ways in which each served to subvert and fracture what Ludmilla Jordanova, amongst others, claims was an emerging

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[147] Ariés, *Images*, p.36.
[148] Gonda, op.cit., p.24.

natural feminine identity.[149] Whilst Jordanova argues persuasively that it was the medical texts which idealised and mystified the female body, I have been trying to show how this mystification was produced by a number of interrelated means. The argument which attributes this to professional wrangling in the medical world over who should manage pregnancy and childbirth cannot wholly explain this pattern of mystification.[150]

Fiction provides us with ambivalent views of maternity and these help to augment this sense of mythologised femininity. Maternal substitutions in some texts removed the woman's body from view yet simultaneously celebrated her biological role. Like the literature of conduct, narrative fiction shared an uneasiness with regard to the female body: it was controlled, managed, silenced, and barred from exit and entry. It may even have been seen as infectious. Women were also often represented as children themselves. Their bodily size and shape became indeterminate as they reached for, hid behind, and behaved like, children. Prescriptions of modesty entailed hiding the female body in numerous ways: children, flowers, clothes, letters, hats and veils, pillars at the opera, other bodies, cloaks and curtains, anything would do except for make-up.

Within the contradictory morphology of adult female presentations, and the patterns of mystification which were produced by them, were concentrated anxieties about the moral meanings associated with the bodies of mother and child. Biological 'truths' implied that maternity meant physical proximity between them. This evidence conflicted with and challenged the patriarchal structure of society. It also offered shape to an emerging sense of gender-identity. The various collocations of woman and child lay bare the whole subject of female sexuality, and the problems involved in its denial. The proof of sexual maturity are, in Lady Davers' eyes, merely proof of physicality. As Eaves and Kimpel note:

> Only Pamela's pregnancy can convince her [Lady Davers] that that paragon is really a flesh and blood creature of her own sex.[151]

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[149] Jordanova, op.cit., p.109.
[150] See Adrienne Rich, *Of Woman Born*, 1976; 6th ed., (London, 1991), pp.128-155.
[151] Eaves and Kimpel, op.cit., p.145.

The eighteenth-century reader of fiction, it seems, found evidence of sexual maturity, in the shape of a woman, too real. What also appears to be inherent in this treatment of maternity is cultural uncertainty about her intrinsic value, a value which medical findings could be seen as having already established. A woman without children was neither woman nor child. The mother's status was similarly equivocal. Ironically, the collocation of mother and child in fiction, both in the domestic arena as well as in other ways, exposed yet another ambiguous, dangerous, female status. Inherent in the idea of a natural role which was used in order to provide assurance about the place of women as producers, and moral guardians of children within a commercial society, were significant tensions and contradictory elements. These rendered more complex and uncertain an eighteenth-century concept of naturalness, and ideas surrounding the intrinsic worth of the woman, regardless of her productivity as a mother.

Chapter Four.

Active Mothers in Eighteenth-Century Narrative Fiction.

Introduction.

The purpose of this Chapter is to examine specific portrayals of the mother figure within a selection of eighteenth-century narrative fiction. One of my aims is to show that mother figures who were present did not, as has been suggested, always greatly lack depth.[1] The mother figures matter for a number of reasons. Firstly, her cultural identity was explored through fictional representation. In addition, the ways in which mothers were presented inform wider conclusions about the nature of the eighteenth-century fictionsand their relationshipswith other forms of writing.

The responses of several modern critics to this treatment of the mother shows that they do not expect to find room for maternity within this body of narrative fiction. This and the preceding Chapter pose the question why this should be in a form which displayed so great an interest in women and adolescence. The findings of this Chapter highlight problems inherent in identifying particular trends within narrative fiction. One of the most familiar of these is that fiction often dealt with the uncertain identity of an unmarried woman who had been removed, in some way, from a familiar domestic environment, and whose marriage returned her to this state by the end of the novel. This has led to certain expectations of that domestic environment: it can be assumed, by inference, that a woman's domestic role was certain, established and endorsed. I want to suggest that not only did some eighteenth-century narrative fiction find a significant place for mothers, it also probed and questioned her nature and role.

In her account of the place of the eighteenth-century mother in the history of English fictional writing, Marjorie McCormick concludes that those mothers who feature generally lack dimension and are portrayed as perfect. Despite this exemplary potential, McCormick finds that "the idealised mother is .... basically irrelevant to the

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[1] Marjorie McCormick, 'Mothers in the English Novel', (Ph.D., Vanderbilt Univ., 1989), p.231.

plot."[2] A simple explanation for this statement is offered: it is that the grave is the place appropriated for virtuous mothers in the fiction of the period.[3] This was sometimes, but by no means always, the case. Nor were all fictional mothers mere figures of fun, although this may have been true of some. Conversely, those who played a prominent, mischievous, even wicked part in the plot could not be presumed uniformly 'bad'. It cannot be said of all mothers who demonstrated degenerate behaviour and who lost their children, that their only function in the plot was didactic. Neither was the sole function of their loss to provide further trials for other characters - especially their offspring - and so to give added momentum to the plot. I am not saying that this is never the case: Amelia's mother, for instance, imprisons her younger daughter and verbally renounces their blood-relationship, thus helping to precipitate Amelia's Clarissa-like elopement.[4] Mrs Manby, too, in the sentimental story of her life, the title of which - *The Mother* (1759) - indicates the thematic importance of this role, elopes after her own mother neglects their family home and becomes "indifferent" towards her daughter.[5]

There are many examples of eighteenth-century fiction which adhered to the idea that children were the reward of morally upstanding mothers. This study will, however, explore some instances which appear to contravene and offer alternatives to those which promoted the 'natural' biological model. I want to show that in several examples of eighteenth-century narrative fiction in which biological mothers had a visible role, their presence was often a central one. Certain representations of mother figures can be seen as having enquired into - and demonstrated discomfort with - the anatomical findings of the medical world.

This study concentrates on a number of texts written by men. Works which are discussed at some length include Daniel Defoe's *Moll Flanders* (1722) and *Roxana* (1724), Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* (1740-1741) and *Clarissa* (1747-1748), and John Cleland's *Fanny Hill* (1749). The ways in which some of these texts were important to

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[2] Ibid. p.231. McCormick's study of the representation of mothers in fiction begins with the cursory and dismissive treatment of Moll Flanders. She is seen as a contemptible, secondary and one-dimensional character. McCormick concludes that "for the first two centuries of the novel the mother remained a peculiarly transitional figure .... half farcical, half believable." (p.231).

[3] Ibid. p.101.

[4] Henry Fielding, *Amelia*, 1751; D. Blewett, Ed. (Harmondsworth, 1987), pp.66-76.

[5] *The Mother: Or, the Happy Distress*, (London, 1759), pp.107-109.

the fictional landcape of the time have already been exhaustively documented by a host of commentators of the eighteenth century: in modern times, many more have added their voices to these. What is especially puzzling, and therefore worth noting here, however, is that there is not a single mother figure whose presence is either sustained or especially significant in my selection of twenty-one works of eighteenth-century fiction which were written by women. Over half of the titles in this selection comprise women's names: *Henrietta* (1758), *Ophelia* (1760), *Evelina* (1778), and *Emmeline* (1788) are just a few. Despite the way in which this betrays a literary preoccupation with the lives of these individuals, most introduce a child whose biological mother dies in its early years. Ophelia's story is fairly typical. Her mother dies within a month of the birth of her daughter.[6] Even those titles which promise a fuller depiction of the domestic scene - such as Susanna Minifie Gunning's *Family Pictures* (1764) - lack a significant mother character. It is true we are told that Eliza Bentley's mother is benevolent and influential in the nurture of her daughter's "charming sensibility", but important news of Eliza's smallpox, and of her marriage plans, are only related to this unseen figure by her father. In contrast to her mother, he is an active character who is constantly in evidence.[7] A number of other works by women, including Sarah Scott's *Agreeable Ugliness* (1754) and Mary Wollstonecraft's *Mary* (1788), fleetingly depict a uninterested mother - or, in Scott's case, an odious one - whose indifference and neglect quickly result in her removal from the child.[8] Why there is so little evidence of prominent mother figures in these works by women can only be a matter for conjecture. It can be seen as a reflection of how the debate in printed matter about issues surrounding maternity was more explicitly a male one. In the light of this, it is unsurprising that male authors moved debates contained in medical writing into their imaginative world. I remain unconvinced, however, that this possibility offers a full explanation for these authorial differences. By the same token, we might expect the uncertainty surrounding maternity - which had to some extent remained heightened in

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6 Sarah Fielding, *The History of Ophelia*, (London, 1760), p.1.

7 [Gunning], *op. cit.*, pp.8, 49, 59.

8 Sarah Scott, *Agreeable Ugliness*, (London, 1754); Mary Wollstonecraft, *Mary - A Fiction*, (London, 1788).

the case of female audiences - to have manifested itself through imaginative representation. What I can say with confidence about this is that one popular contemporary feminist argument - that the woman writer strategically addressed and redefined the female self - circumvents and oversimplifies the case of women's representations of mothers in eighteenth-century fiction.[9] This Chapter shows how male authors offered imaginative alternatives to conduct and medical advice.

The preceding Chapter, which looked at the important absence of mother figures in this narrative fiction, concluded that the works of fiction in question were doing something quite different from employing imaginary contexts in which to locate the direct message of women's conduct literature concerning the domestic ideal. Instead, the nature of the maternal body often became increasingly indeterminate: this sense was symbolically conveyed by the uncertainty surrounding the physical shape of the female subject. Nancy Armstrong claims that, by the end of the eighteenth century, the criteria for determining what was most important in a female had changed.[10] Characteristics of modesty and sexual purity were crucial. Above all, Armstrong argues, the total enclosure of housewife and mother within the domestic domain which had come into being, was identified as 'feminine'. This singular and defined female identity, Armstrong adds, was the product of the collaboration of conduct literature and women's fiction. My own exploration suggests something very different. The emergent sense of gender-identity during this period was far from the singular and sharply-defined "new kind of woman" which Armstrong describes. I will now go on to show how the fictional presentation of mother figures had something to do with this uncertainty.[11] The ambiguous treatment of mothers who were active and present in the text contributes to our recovery of a complex relationship. This existed between exposed women's bodies, and ideas associated with female sexuality, fertility, motherhood, and children's bodies.

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[9] See, for this feminist argument, Kathryn Shevelow, *Women and Print Culture*, (London, 1989); Dale Spender, *Mothers of the Novel*, (London, 1986); Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic*, (1979), new ed., (New Haven; London, 1984).

[10] Nancy Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction*, (Oxford, 1987), pp.3-58.

[11] Ibid. p.3.

i. Richardson's *Pamela:*

The Perfect Surrogate Mother and the Perfect Mother?

There are numerous eighteenth-century works of fiction which, on the surface, seem to conform to a conservative expression of biologically justifiable domestic arrangements. Richardson's first best-selling fiction, *Pamela*, appears to be one of these. Eaves and Kimpel accept Pamela's position as a model mother: they say she puts forward cogent arguments in favour of her natural suitability for the total care of her brood of seven children.[12] Certainly, much is made of Pamela's views on breastfeeding and constant maternal care; indeed, Richardson's third and fourth volumes contain little else. Given that Richardson was prodded into adding two more volumes to *Pamela* - in response both to stinging criticism of the nature of Pamela's virtue, and to what he regarded as less than morally scrupulous imitations - his abiding interest in the maternal ideal can be seen as a part of his ideological project. It was a substantial further attempt to re-emphasize Pamela's true virtue.[13]

Some modern critics find nothing of importance or interest in the pair of added volumes. One even concludes wearily that "two duller volumes have rarely graced the English language."[14] There is evidence to suggest that this intense focus upon 'natural' maternity successfully persuaded at least some eighteenth-century readers of Pamela's goodness.[15] The Rev. John Swinton wrote to Richardson about one of these. He claimed, in a letter from Oxford, that the Dean of Christ Church was about to re-read volumes three and four of *Pamela* again, for the third time in six weeks! Swinton added

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12 T.C.D. Eaves and B.D. Kimpel, *Samuel Richardson - A Biography*, (Oxford, 1971), p.150.

13 1741 saw the publication of two works which were especially critical of Pamela's morality, Henry Fielding's *Shamela*, (London, 1741), and the anonymous *Pamela Censured*, (London, 1741). The long-title of the latter includes a condemnation of Pamela's behaviour as "Alluring", and adds to the probability that Richardson's own further two volumes of *Pamela* were published in response to such attacks. Richardson published seven months after the publication of *Pamela Censured*. In his later editions, Richardson continues to acknowledge minor criticisms of the plot in a more direct way, within 'letters' published with later editions of *Pamela*, such as the 6th edition of 1746. Examples include why Pamela did not make an example of Mrs Jewkes by dismissing her. The author also claims that he has had to respond to pernicious imitations in *Pamela*, 6th ed., (London, 1746), advertisement, p.495.

14 Bernard Kreissman, *Pamela-Shamela*, (Lincoln, Nebraska, 1960), p.10.

15 Jerry Beasley, *Novels of the 1740 s*, (Athens, Georgia, 1982), p.172; Kreissman, op.cit., p.10.

his own note of approval to this testimonial of the Dean's devotion to the work. These final volumes were, he considered, the finest picture of 'nature' that he had ever seen.[16]

In the first part of this Chapter, I want to re-examine some of the features of Pamela's presentation and also, briefly, that of Mrs Jervis, Pamela's first custodian and friend, because she is consistently referred to as Pamela's 'other mother'. Pamela voices orthodox views on the necessity for mothers to adopt a constant nurturing role with their own children; there is also some evidence within this fiction, however, which unsettles the idea that Pamela is the embodiment of the feeling mother about whom she theorises. The mismatch between the plans which Pamela makes for her adopted daughter, and the nature of the maternal role which she adopts with her own children has been perhaps conveniently attributed to her duty to Mr B., who impedes her wish to breastfeed their son Billy and the six children they subsequently have.[17] Several modern social historians would probably attribute this to the notion that Mr B. was doing no more than reflect a convention of his age. This was that, despite the persuasions of the eighteenth-century medical world, some fathers refused to allow their wives to breastfeed because of the sexual abstinence which it was thought to require.[18] I want to question whether this reason would entirely deliver Pamela from the censure of the attentive reader. This is because of the extent to which conduct works insisted that *no* excuse for not breastfeeding should be allowed to come between mother and child. Moreover, this is not the only instance in this text where attention is drawn to inconsistencies in Pamela's own maternal behaviour, and the cumulative effect of this will also be discussed.

Mrs Jervis is a character who has attracted little critical attention, except for the mention of her function as a foil for her sinister counterpart, Mrs Jewkes.[19] Robert Erickson, for instance, devotes a whole Chapter to the character of Mrs Jewkes, yet he only briefly mentions Mrs Jervis twice: he regards her as a "kindly, motherly housekeeper."[20] Clive Probyn is less convinced by Mrs Jervis: he records his suspicions about her by including her in his list of people whom Pamela forgives in the third and

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16 Eaves and Kimpel, op.cit., p.147.
17 Ibid. p.150.
18 Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage*, (1977), 2nd ed., (Harmondsworth,1977), p.312.
19 *P.*, I, 121, 216. Richardson claims that Mrs Jervis is the antithesis of the "unwomanly" Mrs Jewkes.
20 Robert Erickson, *Mother Midnight*, (New York, 1986), p.76.

fourth volumes.[21] Unfortunately for the purposes of my study, Probyn never enlarges upon what he sees as Mrs Jervis's betrayal.

Pamela senses in Mrs Jewkes an even greater enemy than Mr.B. By contrast, we are constantly reminded of the close resemblance which Mrs Jervis bears to Mrs Andrews, Pamela's biological mother. Mrs Jervis's anxious and emotional response to Pamela's sufferings seems as genuine as any feeling mother's. After one of Mr B.'s many failed attempts to seduce Pamela, she notes that Mrs Jervis "cry'd over me as if she was my mother" (I, 27). Pamela matches this demonstration of their intimacy: when she embraces Mrs Jervis on one occasion, her affection for her is that of a daughter for a natural mother: she writes to her own mother about this, and tells her that at the time, she was "thinking of *you*, my dear mother" (III, 481). Mrs Jervis is similarly aware that her relationship with Pamela is very close to that of a natural mother with her daughter. The equation between the two is repeatedly drawn by Mrs Jervis and by Pamela herself: on receiving the news of Mrs Jervis's death, Pamela's last reference to her is that she had been "my other mother" (IV, 421).[22] Richardson is explicit about the equation between Mrs Jervis and Mrs Andrews. In view of this, it would be missing the point to explain the moral precariousness of some of Mrs Jervis's actions with an argument about Richardson's unease with servants' morality. Mrs Jervis enacts the role of Pamela's mother with an acknowledged degree of intimacy. Natural and adoptive mothers are virtually indistinguishable.

There are, however, several episodes which introduce a hint of moral uncertainty regarding the possible interpretations of Mrs Jervis's words and actions. What is produced by this are possibilities for the feminine identity which contradict the paragon mother. Pamela's letters home consistently reinforce the idea that Mrs Jervis is a virtuous maternal substitute, and a seemingly innocuous part of this is Pamela's statement that she "makes my Master's interest her own": this apparently refers to her motherly care of Pamela after the death of her mistress (I, 5). Shortly after this, Mr Longman comments that Pamela would be in a desperate situation were Mrs Jervis not

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[21] Clive Probyn, *English Fiction of the Eighteenth Century*, (London, 1987), p.60.
[22] Other references to Mrs Jervis as Pamela's mother include, I, 5, 18-19, 22, 27, 37, 107, 243; II, 243, 262; IV, 421.

so totally trustworthy (I, 49). The ambiguity of these statements, however, is suggested by subsequent events.

There is a quiet suggestion of the possibility that Mrs Jervis may be in collusion with Mr B., as he tries every trick he knows in his attempts to seduce Pamela throughout the first volume. A comprehensive list of letter contents which is prefixed to the sixth edition of *Pamela* (1746) reveals several ambiguous examples. The brief summary of letter fifteen, for instance, states simply that Pamela's "Master upbraids her with revealing to Mrs Jervis what he order'd her to keep secret."[23] The implication here is one which is never thoroughly denied in this instance, and one which is made again later. It is that Mrs Jervis's interests may not lie entirely with the woman she calls her daughter (I, 18-19). In the letter itself, it is not made amply clear whether this is guesswork on the part of Mr B. Mrs Jervis does, after all, openly shed compassionate tears when she witnesses Pamela's fainting fits. The letters which immediately precede this, however, may have already sown seeds of doubt in the mind of the reader: letter fourteen documents Mr B.'s return from the Lincolnshire estate. We are told that he had private talks, mostly about Pamela, with Mrs Jervis. Earlier, in letter twelve, Pamela had managed to overcome her fear of telling Mrs Jervis about Mr B.'s attempts on her virtue. Ironically, her caution was owing to the possibility that through confessing to Mrs Jervis, Mr B. might "come to know I had told" (I, 19).

In the same list of contents which summarises the main events recounted in each letter, an element of uncertainty surrounding Mrs Jervis's nature and intentions is emphasized again. Not only does Mrs Jervis know that Mr B. is hiding in wait for Pamela, but she has actually orchestrated the whole attempt. After Pamela has packed a single bundle of the belongings which she has chosen to take with her on her departure, Mrs Jervis asks her to fetch a paper from her own parlour (I, 81). In the full knowledge of Mrs Jervis, Mr B. awaits his chance to trap Pamela there alone. Although Erickson admits that Mrs Jervis has stage-managed the whole event, and regards this as "important", he sees it as a benign act rather than in any way sinister.[24] Pamela's

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[23] *P.*, 6th ed., (London, 1746), list of contents.
[24] Erickson, op.cit., p.76.

response is not so calm. There is no mistaking the sexual threat which underscores the collusion between Mr B. and Mrs Jervis here: Pamela immediately assumes this as she catches a glimpse of his back when he surreptitiously sneaks into the adjoining closet. Her response is to rush in panic from the parlour, followed by the hurried securing and bolting of the door which divides them. There is no doubt about the guilty party who has allowed this to happen. Mrs Jervis receives Pamela's stinging verbal attack:

> 'O Mrs Jervis', said I, 'what have you done by me? I see I can't confide in any body. I am beset on all hands! Wretched Pamela! Where shalt thou expect a friend, if Mrs Jervis joins to betray me?' (I, 81).

Even after Mrs Jervis offers an excuse about her good intentions in the matter, Pamela continues to feel that her safety can only truly be assured when she manages to get away from the house, and, by implication, away from all of its inhabitants.

Even Mr B.'s own words highlight the dubiety which, on occasions, colours the view we receive of Mrs Jervis's nature. In the third volume, Mr B. explains that the worst excesses of his attacks upon Pamela's virtue arose from ideas which Mrs Jervis planted in his mind, albeit inadvertently. He claims that "when I was charg'd by Mrs Jervis with the worst Designs; it was enough to make me go further than I had designed" (III, 256). Once again, the presentation of Mrs Jervis in the shadow of moral uncertainty contributes to a sense of the erosion of her status as a paragon of unmitigated virtue. Ironically, only a few days before Mr B.'s confession, Mrs Jervis was hailed by Pamela as a woman who protected her "as well as" her natural mother would (III, 243). As we have already seen, emphasis is placed throughout *Pamela* upon the closely intersecting roles of Mrs Andrews and Mrs Jervis. Richardson has gone to great lengths to stress the way in which this surrogate mother precisely enacts the nurturing, feeling role of the biological mother. Because of this, what amounts to periodic tensions generated by Mrs Jervis's equivocal behaviour also produce an ambiguous statement of defiance regarding the maternal ideal. This subtle treatment of ideas of mothering is augmented by inconsistencies in Pamela's own commentary and behaviour as an adoptive and as a natural mother.

As we have already seen, Pamela is isolated as an example of virtuous mothering by Richardson's biographers, and it is true that Richardson's first work of fiction abounds with her rhetoric upon the subject of being the sort of mother that nature ordained.[25] After her marriage to Mr B., Pamela's only strongly articulated views are on the subject of motherhood. Her introduction to Miss Goodwin - Mr B.'s illegitimate daughter by Sally Godfrey - provides Pamela with the first of many opportunities to articulate her view of a mother's role. There are three points which comprise her central beliefs, and each correlates closely with the advice of the medical world concerning the mother's natural role.[26]

Pamela approves of the idea that it is naturally ordained that a mother should provide constant care for her child, and she begs Mr B. to allow Miss Goodwin to become her constant "companion" (II, 287-288). Secondly, Pamela exhibits signs of a physical affinity with the child she wishes to treat as her own. During their first meeting at the boarding school, Pamela describes the way in which she responds to the child with mysteriously strong feelings:

> I know not how, but I am strangely affected with this dear Child. I wish he [Mr.B.] would be so good as to let me have her home (II, 287).

Later, Pamela repeats that she does not "know how it is" but that she has "conceived a strange Passion for this dear Baby" (III, 145). Descriptions of their mutual compatibility and the way in which Pamela "tenderly" embraces 'her' daughter also dominate depictions of their meetings (III, 78, 507). Finally, Pamela demonstrates her belief in the natural maternal quality which exclusively equips her for the nurture of her child. If she can persuade Mr.B. and Lady Davers to let her take Miss Goodwin from the school, it is her plan to educate the child herself. This is a prospective "sweet employment" which she clearly relishes (II, 288). Pamela extends Locke's argument about a suitable carer

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[25] Eaves and Kimpel, op.cit., p.150.

[26] It is ironic that the little girl whom Pamela plans to treat as her own is the illegitimate product of Mr.B.'s sexual liaison with Sally Godfrey: implicit in this is the proof that unmarried - and hence sexually-disordered - women *are* also mothers. In this case, however, this inconsistency with the biological model is redressed because the child is immediately given up by the penitent mother.

for Miss Goodwin. She demonstrates her agreement with Locke's view of the biological mother naturally taking the child's wishes into consideration, thus extending the perception of her role as Miss Goodwin's ideal surrogate-mother:

> ... if I am right, what an inconsiderate, and foolish, as well as pernicious Practice it is, for a Nurse to waken the Child from its nourishing sleep, for fear it should suffer by Hunger, and instantly pop the Breast into its pretty Mouth, or provoke it to feed when it has no Inclination to either (II, 287).

Pamela's relationship as surrogate mother to Miss Goodwin is not fully realised until she becomes a biological mother in her own right, hence it is significant that Pamela's many ideas and plans remain partly theoretical. It is only very late in the fourth volume that we see evidence that Pamela has finally adopted Miss Goodwin, and by that time she has had six children of her own (IV, 474). After the birth of the first of these, William, Pamela gives a name to the inexplicable feeling which she earlier felt in the presence of Miss Goodwin. Close physical proximity with her own child evokes a feeling of maternal intimacy with him:

> What a new Pleasure has God Almighty's Goodness bestow'd upon me; which, after every little Absense, rises upon me, in a true maternal Tenderness, every step I move toward the dear little Blessing! (IV, 143).

Pamela's description of her own mysterious yet strong attachment to her adoptive daughter and natural son accords with the statements she makes about the natural origin of the child from the mother's body. It corresponds with the perception of a natural maternal role which she recommends. Some of her questions to Mr.B., however, reveal a marked contradiction in the way she interprets this idea of constant maternal care of her child. She asks Mr.B. to try to imagine the fulfilment of a natural mother's duty, and in doing so, reveals that she considers this as done if she attends to her child for just a few hours every day:

> O my dearest Mr.B. whose Enjoyments and pleasures are so great, as those of such Mamma's as[sic] can bend their Minds, two or three Hours in a Day, to the Duties of the Nursery? (IV, 379).

This sort of mother, whose attention to her children occupies a relatively small part of her day, is the target of much strongly-worded criticism in advice literature. This is because she does not devote herself to the constant needs of her children by "being as much with them" as she can, and by "associating them with her self" at all times (II, 106, 109). Richardson's description quite closely echoes Steele's ever-popular censure of bad mothers, who either spend most of their time with their husbands, or arranging and attending social gatherings and playing games:

> And what have they to do in the Nursery, but to play away a Minute or two, which hangs on their Hands, with their Children? (I, 106).

Pamela's behaviour cannot match Lady Stanly's example of good mothering: Mary Pilkington is at pains to point out that Lady Stanly is a mirror for the female sex because she "spent her whole time in the cultivation of her children's minds and the improvement of their hearts."[27] The insistence on this point throughout conduct literature for women cannot be stressed enough: it is repeated over and over again by many conduct writers. Although it is unlikely that Pamela's words strike even the most attentive of modern readers as especially loaded, they would almost certainly have alerted - and alarmed - any eighteenth-century reader familiar with conduct manuals, even those whose exposure to them had been of the briefest nature. In this way, Pamela's adherence to the bio-medical maternal ideal is, at best, only partial. It is this dissociation which renders my argument at odds with those of commentators who identify the weakness of volumes three and four of *Pamela* with the way in which they mimic the direct message of the conduct book. In other words, the incomplete, even conflicting, qualities of Pamela's example of motherhood mean that I cannot agree with

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[27] Mary Pilkington, *A Mirror for the Female Sex*, (1798), 2nd ed., (London, 1799), p.xi.

Probyn's point that these final two volumes merely serve as a "reinforcement of bourgeois values."[28]

Further evidence of a lack of uniformity in the treatment of the ideology of mothering throughout *Pamela* is supplied by the problematic issue of breastfeeding. Contradictions in the arguments for and against breastfeeding put forward by Mr.B. raise still more questions about the idea of purity and goodness which the medical world associates with the mother's body. Pamela establishes her views about the role of a mother while she anticipates the arrival of Miss Goodwin, but her arguments with Mr.B. on the subject also reinforce the bio-medical source for her ideas. "The Nourishment of the Mother must be most natural to the Child", she states (IV, 12). Breastfeeding, she continues, is plainly a "natural" continuation of the function of the mother's body before her child's birth (IV, 11). It is "by the Designation of Nature" that the child brings "Nourishment into the World with it" (IV, 13). Pamela's fears of the nurse transmitting disease and bad traits to her own son also closely duplicate the language of persuasive popular medical advice: she clearly identifies the mother's body with a natural feeding and facilitating function, and conversely, that of the nurse with impurity and a dubious moral quality (IV, 12, 256). Her father agrees with her. He insists that Pamela's own sense of virtue is the product of having been fed by her mother's "kind Breast" (IV, 25). Perhaps most interesting of all is the way in which Mr.B. adds his voice to the growing consensus concerning this view of the natural role of the mother who should imbue her children with good-nature (III, 498). Although Pamela justifies employing nurses for her children on the pretext that Mr.B. is "against" her feeding them herself, Mr B. inveighs against nursing because he associates nursed children with unruly, antisocial behaviour:

> Humour'd by our Nurses, thro' the Faults of our Parents, we practise first upon them; and shew the Gratitude of our Dispositions in an Insolence that ought rather to be check'd and restrain'd, than encouraged (II, 243).

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[28] Probyn, op.cit., p.61.

Although Mr.B. supports the idea that the socialisation of an infant begins with nursing and nurture from its natural mother, he insists that Pamela employs nurses for her own children (III, 498). Mr.B.'s view of the practice of breastfeeding is a vacillating one, and reminders of his uncertainty are present even in the final textual and - in later editions - pictorial view we have of Pamela and her young family.[29] In the sixth edition, two anonymous nurses hover in a shadowy area of the room behind the intimate gathering of Pamela and her children. Such inconsistencies are incongruous with some modern interpretations of Pamela's role, such as those of Beasley and Peters. In 'The Pregnant Pamela' (1981), for example, it is argued that ambivalence in the presentation of the domestic arena is finally resolved as Pamela presides over her family as an ideal mother.[30] The contradictions which are inherent in Mr.B.'s arguments, however, serve to cast doubt upon the idea that it is Mr.B.'s will which prevails and which prevents Pamela from nursing her children.

Pamela's behaviour, and her priorities with regard to her children, introduce additional problems. Conduct advice upon the matter of maternal duty was apparently unequivocal. One of several articles upon this subject in *The Gentleman's Magazine* summarises the conduct position for any of its readers who may have needed reminding (XXII, 508). *No* excuse is good enough to deny the child its mother's milk:

> ... the mother's milk is naturally the propor [sic] food, already digested and assimilated upon her stomach .... It is so almost essentially necessary, that the want of it can be but ill supplied, even by the milk of another healthy woman; which in no other case, but that of a real inability of the mother to suckle ought to be allowed (XXII, 508).

Again, Pamela's concurrence with one of Mr B.'s views - that she must not feed her own children - conflicts with this insistent advice. It is only possible for us to speculate as to why a text which is so structured upon earnestly-debated issues should make contradictory suggestions about maternal behaviour. It may be that such inconsistencies

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[29] *P.*, 6th ed., (London: for the author, 1746), IV, 474.
[30] Beasley, op.cit., p.140; Dolores Peters, 'The Pregnant Pamela', in *Eighteenth Century Studies*, XIV (No. 4), (1981), pp.445-450.

were a manifestation of Richardson's fascination and unease with the female body. The representation of maternity in *Pamela* may also be a reflecion of Richardson's ambivalent attitude towards the domestic environment. In other words, it seems that Richardson, either consciously or otherwise, was using the assumed conduct knowledge of his readers to dispute the notion of the pure maternal breast. This interpretation may seem to be in direct contrast to the pursuit of his ideological project in *Pamela*; yet it is surely the case that his later creation, Lovelace, vividly envisages the breast as the symbol of sexual attractiveness in his fantasy of Clarissa breastfeeding (706). What is certain is that the ambivalence surrounding this domestic issue is not resolved within the four volumes of *Pamela.*

ii. The Children of Prostitutes:

Fanny Hill, Moll Flanders and *Roxana.*

The view taken in this thesis regarding the subtle treatment of maternity in narrative fiction is not one which is shared by many contemporary critics. Flynn's conclusions about the representation of the female body in the works of Swift and Defoe are especially interesting because of her predominant belief in a high value set upon the human body during the period. Our purpose and findings are apparently similar: Flynn's exploration of *Moll Flanders* and *Roxana* in particular leads her to conclude that "their progress tells much about their world, a world severely confused about the domesticity it purports to value."[31] Ironically, however, Flynn makes only vague and unsubstantiated reference to features of their treatment as mothers, a treatment which seems to me to be of great significance in the exploration of the domestic world. The source of confusion, she asserts, results from Roxana's position as a giver of life, and as a likely murderer. Their position as mothers Flynn appears to regard as crucial, yet it seems as if their treatment as such has not been given the painstaking close textual investigation which is so much in evidence elsewhere in her study. Flynn claims only

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[31] Flynn, op.cit., p.65.

that "on the whole, they are monstrous mothers."[32] McCormick is similarly dismissive of subtleties and variety in the treatment of Moll as a mother.[33] The only act involving the treatment of Moll's children which McCormick mentions in her study of mothers is that "she doesn't seem to recognise that giving her children away to various takers may be [morally] questionable."[34] Another critique of Defoe's imagined prostitutes, Ian Watt's, makes puzzling excuses for Defoe's curious treatment of Moll's character, and the plot. Thin explanations are offered for this most commanding feature of Moll's behaviour.[35] Watt is baffled by Moll's inconsistent displays of maternal behaviour, and he can hardly believe that Moll has no innate "proper maternal feeling."[36] Remarkably, Watt never questions his own notion of instinctive maternal behaviour. The clearest evidence of Moll's adherence to the biological maternal ideal is paradoxically cited as entirely confusing:

> On the one hand, she can behave with complete sentimental abandon, as when she kisses the ground her long-separated son Humphry has been standing on; on the other hand, although she shows some fondness for two or three of her children, she is by normal standards somewhat callous in her treatment of most of them the majority are mentioned only to be forgotten, and, once left in the care of relatives or foster-mothers, - are neither redeemed subsequently nor even inquired after when opportunity permits .... It is difficult to see how this [behaviour demonstrated by a heartless mother] can be reconciled either with her kissing the ground that Humphry has trodden, or with the fact that she herself loudly condemns unnatural mothers.[37]

In contrast to my focus upon an ambiguous treatment of maternity in this fiction, Watt finally - and unsatisfactorily - lays the blame for perceived inconsistencies at the door of Defoe's absentmindedness, and even his 'critically inferior' readership.[38]

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[32] Ibid. p.65.
[33] McCormick, op.cit., p.150.
[34] Ibid. p.150.
[35] Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel*, (1957), New ed., (London, 1987), pp.99-110.
[36] Ibid. p.111.
[37] Ibid. p.110.
[38] Ibid. p.99.

Moll's responses to motherhood are at the very least absorbing; a network of disruptions in mother-child relations is significant in the portrayal of mothering in *Moll Flanders*, and contributes to ambivalences which are part of the delight of the whole work. It is important to stress, however, that the resolution in *Moll Flanders* also provides a fuller picture of how this fiction imaginatively explores the role of the mother. Defoe's treatment of mothering in his fictions offers some resistance to the medical maternal idea; this will be the subject of a later part of this Chapter. At this point, I want to re-examine certain aspects of *Moll Flanders* and *Fanny Hill.* Moll's relationship with her son Humphry is of particular interest as it reveals a central conservative conformity with the idea that it is only the sexually-ordered, virtuous maternal body which is naturally destined to produce and nurture children.

In *Moll Flanders* and in *Fanny Hill*, the protagonist's fertility offers evidence of both her physical maturity and her sexual activity. In a sense, the fertility of each woman is resumed at a point in the narrative immediately after it is claimed that her complete spiritual redemption has taken place. My emphasis upon the significance and authenticity of this moment of redemption is in keeping with Defoe's own. It is exclusively stressed, probably because we have already witnessed Moll's earlier, half-hearted false starts; the one following the house-fire theft is especially memorable (215). Distinct emphasis is also required because Moll admits to having undergone a very gradual period of enlightenment beforehand, during which her religious commitment was unfavourably compared to that of her penitent midwife (303).

Moll and Fanny are raised to the status of mothers after the spiritual redemption of each has taken place. Motherhood is a reward for what Dr Robert Couper describes as sexually ordered behaviour, after these women have indulged in years of licentious sexual behaviour.[39] Fanny, the entrepreneurial courtesan, is transformed after her absolution. Cleland, perhaps anticipating the scepticism of some of his readers, insists that her reform has arisen from a recognition of "truth resulting from compared

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[39] Robert Couper, *Speculations on the Mode and Appearances of Impregnation*, (Edinburgh, 1789), p.133.

experiences."[40] However weak this resolution may appear to be, Fanny marries her long-absent lover Charles and immediately produces a brood of children:

> ... [Charles] obliged me to receive his hand, by which means I was ... in pass, amongst other innumerable blessings, to bestow a legal parentage on those fine children you have seen by this happiest of matches ..[41]

Children signal what Fanny claims is the tail-piece of morality following her rejection of a life of vice. In apparent accordance with medical texts which teach that the mother's body is pure, Fanny remained sexually active and infertile until the commencement of 'true' womanhood.

The association of moral reform, physical maturity, and the introduction of children is similarly emphasized through a variety of means in *Moll Flanders.* Motherhood and the mother's treatment of her offspring provide Defoe with a potent theme. Moll's role as a daughter herself is constantly woven into the plot, and it provides a thematic reminder of how important the ideal maternal role is to the reflective protagonist. Moll recalls several of her own mother-substitutes, all women who have altered the shape of her life, and some of whom partially fulfil Moll's own description of a bad nurse (179-180).[42] Moll also recalls her physical response to being questioned about her own treatment as an infant: she believes that it was an unknown band of gypsies who took care of her at a crucial time during her infancy. Whatever the truth is regarding the first unaccountable two and a half or so years of her life, she is certain of one detail. That she was not nursed by her own mother is clearly very important to her. In addition, strong and therefore significant physical signals are associated with Moll's anticipation, or receipt of, worldly goods. Her excitement at the prospect of these produces a dramatic change in her facial colouring and provokes prickling bodily heat. On one occasion, however, a question from one of her midwives evokes a strikingly similar response:

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[40] Cleland, op.cit., p.223.
[41] Ibid. p.223.
[42] Moll complains that some nurses can be seen as a contrived means of murdering the child because they are thoroughly indifferent towards them.

> She touch'd me to the Quick, when she asked if I was sure that I was nurs'd by my own Mother; on the Contrary I was sure I was not (180).

This adds to the many conservative suggestions in *Moll Flanders* concerning the importance of the nurture of a child's natural mother to its moral well-being.

In one recent study of Moll's sexual identity, her relationship with her son seems to have been overlooked. Curiously, the study concentrates solely upon female characters in its investigation of aspects of femininity in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century narrative fiction.[43] Moll's reintroduction to her son, Humphry, deserves fuller documentation because he signifies her "sincere penitence" and her physical transformation into a mother (342-355). Towards the end of Moll's life of crime, at the time of her arrival in America, the protagonist makes a definite pronouncement concerning her fertility: "as for Children", we are told, advancing years meant that Moll was considerably "past any thing of that kind" (353). She is presumed to be around sixty years of age. Despite the biological impossibility of motherhood due to her age, however, Defoe employs a pastoral metaphor for fertility just before the moment when she meets her son again. Moll finds the land on the East coast of America "very fertile and good" (351). Still more significant is the manner in which her son greets her. Moll recalls that as she claimed some land for herself, her adult son was introduced to her and adopted a posture suggestive of an infant or very young child:

> ... he could not speak, but I could feel his breast heave and throb like a child, that cries, but sobs, and cannot cry it out (355).

This meeting with her son affords the first notable instance when Moll the commentator makes a commitment to moral reflection which is not instantly disrupted by further ambiguous behaviour. She makes an important simultaneous claim to a new body: this physical transformation distinguishes her body from its previous state. She claims to have been changed into "quite another body" after meeting the prostitute-procuress (57).

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[43] Susan Greenfield, *Novel Daughters: The Family Romance*, (Ph.d., Pennsylvania Univ., 1991), p.3.

Erickson has drawn attention to the equation between Moll and 'mother midnight' at this point because he concludes that Moll metaphorically experiences the agony of childbirth at a time when she can at last afford a child, both emotionally and fiscally. Moll's explanation of the meeting with her son is highlighted by Erickson. It is the dramatic function of Moll's final birth metaphor which is central to his interpretation of Moll's maternal identity at this point. Her words are apparently intended to harness the sympathies of readers who are mothers themselves:

> ... let any Mother of Children that reads this, consider it, and but think with what anguish of Mind I restrained myself; what yearnings of Soul I had in me to embrace him, and weep over him; and how I thought all my Entrails turn'd within me, that my very bowels mov'd, and I knew not what to do; as I now know not how to express these agonies (342).

The intensity of Moll's response to the first sight of her son readily lends itself to a metaphorical interpretation of childbirth; yet it also offers further possibilities for the understanding of Moll's role as a maternal ideal, for which there is no place in Erickson's psychoanalytic and economic consideration of motherhood. Moll's extreme physical response can be seen as a code which indicates a profound positive attachment to her son. To the eighteenth-century readership, who especially looked to the body for evidence of absolute truth, the wrenching of Moll's insides is a very strong indicator of their 'natural' affinity as mother and child. Her body proves the strength of their mutuality. Moll's body is renewed again; she is now the source of feeling and virtue which has become associated with maternity. The subsequent scene showing Moll embracing her 'infantile' son, serves to reinforce this view of her redemption. In the last pages of this fiction, the final views we have of Moll re-emphasize this use of her transformation and newfound maternal role, and her claim to total moral reformation. The "sincere penitence" for a "Monstrous Life" certainly lacks the ambiguity and temporary appearance of former hollow resolutions. In keeping with this, the feeling nature of her son is matched with exhaustive evidence of Moll's own tender sensibility (359, 366). His goodness, Moll admits, "fetch'd Tears from me": mother and child share

the distinction of virtue which the conduct manuals ascribe to the natural maternal nurture of her young child. The integrity of her sentiment is proven when her adult son adopts the posture of a young child, and is described accordingly as "the Kindest and tenderest Child that ever Woman had" (361). Rather than evolving solely as a mother midnight figure herself, a figure allied with unfavourable stereotypes in Erickson's exploration of literary representations of midwifery, Moll becomes a maternal paragon.[44]

Motherhood is identified with a larger-than-life status. The implication of this is conservative, and accords with the emerging opinion of the eighteenth-century medical world. It is that the maternal status is 'natural', idealised, and worthwhile within a managed system of sexual behaviour. The reward of children in the final scenes of both *Fanny Hill* and *Moll Flanders* provides us, some might say, with two rather unremarkable examples amongst many conservative literary attempts to popularise and reinforce a medically endorsed maternal ideal. Here are the unmistakable vehicles which, modern historians such as Kelly, Jordanova, and Flynn have argued, successfully attempt to rationalise the literary female body into a natural system of domestic and sexual management.[45] As I will go on to describe, however, the moment of her redemption and physical transformation is not the only one in which Moll demonstrates high maternal qualities: confusion and ambiguity surrounding the idealised mother are not simply the result of terrible mothers being transformed into model mothers within the same texts. This prostitute *is* typically indifferent towards her children, and disposes of them for the shadiest of reasons. In addition, Moll and Roxana intermittently exhibit the tenderest of feelings towards their children during their lives of crime and debauchery. In doing so, these representations of mothers conflicted with the bio-medical findings upon which the eighteenth-century maternal ideal was founded.

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[44] Erickson, op.cit., p.67, argues that Moll becomes her own mother midnight by the end of the novel, through the way in which she copies and continues her own mother's life and by the reversal of her relationship with the governess, who becomes child-like and penitent. See pp.166-168, for instances of the sinister potential of mother midnight.

[45] Gary Kelly, *The Jacobin Novel*, (Oxford, 1976); Ludmilla Jordanova, 'Naturalising the Family', in L.J. Jordanova, Ed. *Languages of Nature*, (London, 1983); Carol Houlihan Flynn, *The Body in Swift and Defoe*, (Cambridge, 1990), p.37.

It is important to establish the specific medical context for this discussion of how some fictions reproduced or rejected the domestic ideal. Eighteenth-century medical writings and health manuals largely associated female fertility with the healthy, married young woman. Of course this can be seen, to some degree, as a reflection of social trends. Whilst simple economic facts might have helped to explain patterns of fertility and infant survival rates, medical writings largely used the female body as an index of a woman's moral purity. The implication was that because the woman was unmarried, her reproductive capability was disordered in some way: a great deal was dependent upon the nature of her conduct. Disease was seen as a manifestation of that disorder, and was a crucial factor in the predictions and explanations of medical men, as to exactly which women could become mothers, and could properly nourish their children at a time of high infant and child mortality. In contrast to the rosy picture which was painted of married women and their offspring was the disorder and suffering of the precarious, unmarried, childless woman. In the case of the unmarried virgin, disease occasioned by a redundant uterus was shown manifesting itself in symptoms suffered by the woman herself. Household cookbooks abounded with recipes for complaints such as the ubiquitous green-sickness and others involving the redundant uterus, all of which were seen as being precipitated by childlessness.[46]

The fertility of another group of unmarried women, quite distinct from those suffering from a redundant and disordered uterus, was also the subject of discussion in plenty of medical texts. Having children was established as the 'natural' role for the physically mature female body, yet it is significant that, in many cases, various reasons were offered to account for the inability of sexually active unmarried women to produce children. This group were unable to conceive or produce live children: their bodies were described as unsuitable for feeding and nurturing them. It was very widely agreed upon in medical writings that women who were sexually active outside marriage were either barren due to some underlying illness, or unable to produce healthy or live babies because of other kinds of contamination of the infant's body by that of the woman.

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[46] See John Mullan, *Sentiment and Sociability*, (Oxford, 1988), pp.225-228, for a fuller examination of the literary treatment of this group of women for whom womanhood does not mean the life of the fertile, domesticated, married female.

Erickson has noted that whores especially were said to be destroying themselves by the very practice of their profession.[47] As the author of *Aristotle's Master-Piece* (1665) put it, "Many women there are, whose violent Lusts contracts a heat that either destroys the Eggs, or hinders them from being impregnated."[48] According to Thomas Laqueur, there was a prevalent belief that exactly the correct amount of heat needed to be generated for conception to take place.[49] These women could not propagate because it was believed that too much heat, produced by disordered or over-frequent sexual activity, prevented conception. William Buchan offers another explanation for the infertility of unmarried and sexually active women: venereal infection is, he insisted at the time, a direct cause of abortion.[50] If by chance the infant of a woman suffering from this should survive, Buchan adds, it is unlikely to live for many days because it is "commonly very delicate. Its flesh is soft, and its joints are very feeble."[51] The physician John Astruc offers reasons similar to those of Buchan for the publication and popularisation of his work on venereal infections. He also speaks of a need for 'public health', in the form of wider availability of medical self-help advice, and more generally, the demystification of medical conditions and cures.[52] Astruc's descriptions of children who could possibly be produced by immoral liaison are yet more lurid than Buchan's. Astruc prided himself on his rejection of numerous myths which surround the subject of fertility, and upon his bold step of giving readers the unadulterated medical facts. The first part of his work is dedicated to dispelling stories, based upon certain Old Testament books, about the historical origins of venereal infections. Later publications, which echo Astruc's warnings, lend support to his claims about the candid and biologically-based nature of this work.[53] One of his more grotesque allegations is that countless illegitimate infants were already in a state of partial decomposition at birth, born "squallid, half-rotten, [and] ulcerated": if such accounts are to be believed, they suggest that the chances of survival

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[47] Erickson, op.cit., p.38.
[48] *Aristotle's Master-Piece; Or the Secrets of Generation Display'd*, (1665), new ed., (London, 1704), p.81.
[49] Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex*, (Cambridge, Mass. 1990), p.52.
[50] William Buchan, *Observations Concerning the Prevention and Cure of Venereal Disease*, (London, 1796), p.159.
[51] Ibid. p.148.
[52] John Astruc, *A Treatise of the Venereal Disease*, (1736) Tr. W.Barrowby, (London, 1737).
[53] Couper, op.cit.; Buchan, op.cit.

for these children were very minimal indeed.[54] Later in the century, another Scottish physician demonstrates the continued prevalence of this view of unmarried, sexually active mothers:

> ... an imperfect fecundation may take place; but its product determines the want of energy and the unqualified state of the mother from whence it drew its principal arrangement.[55]

Couper provides still more explicit collocation of the unmarried state of a mother with disorder, illness, and ultimately contagion of any child she may have produced. There is a clash here between bio-medical findings and sociological evidence which shows that 'immorality' did not necessarily result in childlessness. Records show that the prevalence of abandoned babies in England, many of them produced out of wedlock, so alarmed a group of philanthropists that it brought about the opening of the London Foundling Hospital in 1741. In its early years, travelling sellers of chapbooks were paid a nominal fee per capita for bringing babies abandoned in town and country alike to the foundling home. As a result, within the space of five years, the home was inundated with thousands of parentless children, many of whom had probably been abandoned because of the difficulties associated with illegitimacy.[56] Entries in a selection of Cambridgeshire parish registers for births during the first half of the century also announce the prevalence of illigitimacy: children born outside wedlock are marked in the registers with the mother's name alone, and the words "base born."[57] In Linton during 1755, for example, two children out of a total of thirty-two who were baptised in that year were illegitimate, whilst during each of the years 1751 and 1754, there had been only one such baptism. Of course, these statistics may not accurately reflect the numbers of illegitimate infants born in the parish. The benefactors of the London Foundling Hospital began their work between the same years because of the incidence

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[54] Couper, op.cit., I, Addenda, ii.
[55] Ibid. p.74.
[56] *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 29 vols, 11th ed., (London, 1910-1911).
[57] T.P.R. Layng, comp., *St Mary's Church, Linton, Parish Records, 1559-1844*, (Cambridge, 1970); Layng, comp., *Grantchester Parish Register, 1539-1851*, (Cambridge, 1977); N.K. Travers, comp., *St.Giles' Parish Records, 1585-1860*, (Cambridge, 1990).

of infant exposure in towns and rural districts: such unrecorded births cannot be ruled out in these districts. Also, other parish records which correspond with the time note that several unbaptised children were buried with their mothers, and the marital status of their parents went unrecorded. In spite of the potential inaccuracies of these records, however, they do show that there were some illegitimate births. There appears to be a mismatch between what happened in everyday life and what the medical men were saying about the nature of the fertile woman's body.

It is especially interesting that the medical world insisted upon depicting mothers who appeared, at the very least, to exhibit the appearance of virtuous character by being married. As we have seen, this was because studies of anatomy showed that the mother's body was considered crucial in forming that of her child, and in providing it with sustenance. There are obvious discrepancies between the documented special treatment of abandoned, unwanted, and sometimes illegitimate children, and assertions of the medical world concerning female fertility. Throughout the century, the medical consensus was that it was highly unlikely that an immoral liaison could produce a child. Inevitably, a rare mention is made of a woman who does bear children under such circumstances. Couper, as was mentioned earlier, conceded that occasionally such children may stand some chance of survival. Buchan's brief mention of a similar woman confirms this possibility: he explains how arrangements must be made for the feeding of such a child. A promiscuous woman could, Buchan insists, bring an infant into the world "infected with the venereal disease", and he never wholly dismisses the possibility that such an infant could survive.[58] In spite of a few brief examples, however, eighteenth-century medical texts were unanimous in their insistence upon a link between sexual 'propriety' and female fertility. There was a clash between medical interpretations of biological detail and information which told what was happening in eighteenth-century society. Illegitimate children were, of course, born to unmarried mothers, and a spiral of events often followed a woman's 'transgressions'. She might turn to prostitution. If she was from a family with property, her ruined economic prospects could make a life as a mistress or possibly even as a seasoned prostitute

[58] Buchan, op.cit., p.153.

virtually inevitable. Evidence of, and concern for, children produced by these women raises questions about the relationship between medical findings and actual evidence which exists concerning fertility. In the case of this particular group of women, both sources of information appear to be at odds in the way each contributes to a culture's understanding of female fertility.

This mismatch seems to bolster what Laqueur has said about the interpretation of dissections of the female body in general during the period.[59] Laqueur claims that it was the interreaction of political, sociological, marital, and demographic changes, some of which were peculiar to the eighteenth-century, which determined the cultural understanding of the female body. This in turn produced a new ideology about femininity.[60] Biological findings are merely a construct, he concludes; they are only a reflection of a culture's ideology concerning maternal goodness. Laqueur's argument conflicts with claims that the findings of dissection which migrated into popular literature produced a 'fixed' feminine ideal by the end of the eighteenth century.[61] The findings of this thesis are also chiefly at odds with this. It is surely the case that the dissection table and the cultural construct of motherhood were related in ways which neither Laqueur nor the former historical consensus have taken into account. The treatment of medical representation in several forms of popular literature - those which were explored more fully in earlier Chapters - was convoluted, ambiguous, and at best uncertain.[62]

Instead of giving it a central role in the evolution of maternal identity, Laqueur's thesis reduces biology to a recapitulation of ideology. It was not, he says, a record of what was really observed in the theatre of anatomy. We have seen how the century witnessed a growth in exploration of and interest in the female reproductive process. What has also been shown in concurrence with this is a culture producing different forms of popular literature which were constructing and articulating alternatives to the

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[59] Laqueur, op.cit., p.88.
[60] Ibid. pp.10-11.
[61] See footnote 10.
[62] See Chapter One for my discussion of the treatment of maternity in selected periodicals for male and for female readers, and also of its treatment in household cookbooks and health manuals. See Chapter Two for its treatment in the literature of conduct, and Chapter Three for an exploration of certain representations of maternity in narrative fiction of the period.

new ideology of the mother. This evidence suggests that there was no absolute or universal ideology which could have coloured the reflections and interpretations of anatomists in the singular way which Laqueur suggests. In addition, constant references to a medical authority in health manuals which taught about appropriate childcare, support the idea that medical writings helped to create, rather than simply reflect, an authoritative maternal ideal.

The medical world, however, may have been influenced by the indeterminate sense of gender-identity which a literary response to the natural maternal ideal was producing alongside its more conservative educational examples. No interpretation of dissection can be neatly separated from its cultural context. There is a sense in which the production of children outside marriage and through prostitution contradicted what had been observed on the dissecting table as the natural affinity of mother and child. This could have produced unease and may, instead, have actually predisposed medical men towards the more emphatic interpretations which were made about immorality and female fertility. It is also worth mentioning that the medical profession of the period put up a notoriously tough fight when it introduced professional obstetric services. Protecting and restricting knowledge about obstetric practice helped to establish this field of medicine as one of the most profitable by the 1740s; this was a practice which Sterne enjoyed lampooning with the financially-aware figure of Dr Slop.[63] It is possible that preserving this professional territory necessitated the reinforcement of the findings of dissection. Removing any ambiguities in medical findings could have helped to augment the medical status. It could have been a way of establishing medical men as the only group with certain, full and intimate knowledge of the human system of reproduction. Both the medical professional standing, and the work available, would have been protected from the nearest competition. Those who vied with doctors for this part of their trade were female midwives who usually lacked formal medical training.[64]

In the preceding Chapter, a concluding suggestion was made about the significance of absent mother figures. This was that the eighteenth-century medical

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[63] Adrienne Rich, *Of Woman Born*, (1976), 6th ed., (London, 1991), pp.128-155.

[64] See Chapter One, which deals with the representations of the gravid uterus by the eighteenth-century medical world, for a fuller description of this professional wrangling.

exposure of the mother's body, and its idealisation, were part of a process of producing myth-like uncertainty, and de-mythologising. This was, in part, the product of a lack of explicit or 'concrete' literary maternal presences. In a sense, the mother's body was too dangerous and uncertain to allow its life-like representation. In this Chapter, with its discussion focussed upon the way some mothers were presented, I want to offer another view which relates to this complex process of articulating these mythic elements of motherhood. It is that the treatment of fertility in specific narrative texts served to expose the maternal ideal. Perhaps the biological bases for aspects of the eighteenth-century medicalisation of motherhood were not considered life-like enough by writers of fiction. Perhaps these authors sought to draw attention to the incongruity between this ideal and their knowledge of living, unmarried and reprobate mothers. In the next few pages I propose to continue re-examining aspects of maternal behaviour in some of Defoe's work. This is because some of his fictional representations of mothers offer the possibility that fiction adhered to the conservative maternal ideal: it simultaneously tested out and presented alternative, sometimes contradictory views of mothers.

Certain eighteenth-century literary representations of the lives of prostitutes were at odds with medical opinions of the relationship between fertility and immorality. In these fictions, what may be regarded as an alternative to the medical view of maternity was produced by the incidence of living children born to prostitutes. I want to stress that this was not a replacement for the strong adherence, in many works of fiction, to the presentation of an idealised notion of maternity which was heavily indebted to the medical world. What it did was offer some degree of resistance to the medical model. Flynn's argument that uncertainty surrounding domestic arrangements arises from the conflict between wicked and reformed mothers within individual works of fiction does not seem to address this issue. This alternative to the conservative bio-medical view was further augmented, in some novels, by descriptions of the most lewd and fertile prostitutes behaving like the maternal ideal: the notions of womanly virtue and sensibility which overlapped with this ideal seemed incongruous with prostitution. This section of the Chapter will focus upon how the behaviour of Moll and Roxana illuminate the relationship between narrative fiction and medical writings.

There is in *Moll Flanders* an acknowledgement of the edifying appearance of mother-child intimacy in a scene in which Moll manipulates the onlooker's estimation of her virtue. At one stage in her career of vice, Moll has developed a taste for theft. As one means of avoiding detection, she creates a domestic scene in which she is sitting sewing, accompanied by a small child (226). She has consciously constructed the view which others will have of them when they open the door. "I had the little girl with me", Moll emphasizes, stressing her awareness that the apparent intimacy of mother and child makes her appear a paragon of virtue. "Eveything look'd so innocent", she adds with satisfaction (226). Despite the self-conscious way in which the edifying potential of the maternal ideal is treated in this instance, there are further instances when Moll's life as both prostitute and thoroughly wicked woman is intermittently punctuated with glimpses of high maternal qualities. This treatment is especially worthy of attention because of the differences in portrayals of good mothering behaviour in Defoe's conduct literature. In *The Family Instructor* (1718), for instance, women who leave their children, or who neglect them in other ways, are described as unnatural: they are consistently presented as thoroughly deplorable, immoral mothers.[65]

Unlike Fanny Hill, and contrary to assertions made by the medical men of the day, Moll Flanders manages to produce plenty of surviving children. As she grows big with children, so do her piles of money and valuables. Moll accrues wealth by theft and deception, by becoming both a mistress and a deceptive wife to several men. Unwittingly, she marries her own brother. It is clear from the outset that Moll dreads being encumbered with children. As a mistress to one of the sons of the house where she works, she is, at first, relieved to find that she produces no children. Eventually, after she carefully manages to arrange a marriage with this lover's brother, she has two. This, Watt complains, has "no later connection with the plot."[66] It is, however, an integral part of the shape of this work when considered as a feature of Defoe's wider consideration of motherhood. Unsurprisingly, in the light of the clandestine

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[65] Defoe, *The Family Instructor*, (1718), 12th ed., (London, 1741), pp.47, 95, 139, 144, 175.
[66] Watt, op.cit., p.105.

arrangements which procured her marriage, we hear little about these children, except that their scheming mother heartily rejoices when they are removed from her care:

> My two were indeed taken happily off my Hands, by my Husband's Father and Mother, and that was all they got by Mrs Betty (56).

In the light of the treatment a medically-authenticated maternal ideal receives throughout *Moll Flanders*, particularly in its conclusion, it is unremarkable that Moll is portrayed as a "terrible" mother to these, and to the ten children subsequently born to her. She generally demonstrates indifference to each, making no distinction here between those who are born whilst she is married and those born outside, or within a pretended marriage. We only learn about her third child because it suffers an untimely death, and the fourth, fifth, and sixth are several years old before Moll finally mentions them. Even this is precipitated only by her concern about having committed incest with their father in Virginia (62, 87). One of her husbands accuses her of being an "unnatural Mother" for leaving two of their children and, with the exception of the tenth child, the last four receive the briefest of attention (91). Moll also seizes the opportunity to make 200 guineas profit by exaggerating the expenses incurred during her lying-in with a seventh baby (119).

Moll's prolific production of children contradicts the laws of fertility as they were set out in medical writings. In addition to this, her treatment of her seventh and tenth children is particularly noteworthy because it echoes advice given to mothers about natural mothering. Intrinsic in this representation is the notion of the maternal body as a source of all virtue. Her seventh child is the issue of an illicit affair with a man from Bath who is both married himself, and oblivious to Moll's status as wife of her own brother. Despite the boy's illegitimacy, she uses precisely the kind of language which demonstrates considerable strength of feeling about parting with him, and her desire to remain physically as near to him as possible:

> And now, I was greatly perplex'd about my little Boy; it was Death to me to part with the Child, and yet when I consider'd the Danger of being one

> time or other left with him to keep without being able to support him, I then resolv'd to leave him; but then I concluded to be near him myself too, that I might have the Satisfaction of seeing him, without the Care of providing for him (127).

Similarly atypical is Moll's demonstration of her positive attachment to her tenth child when faced with the prospect of removing him so that another man should not discover the affair she has had since he left. Although she says that she would have been "glad to miscarry" this child, and mother midnight is on hand with a sinister offer to dispose of his body, Moll twice insists that "Affection was plac'd by Nature in the Hearts of Mothers to their Children" (179). When the clandestinely conceived child is born, demonstrations of this natural affinity momentarily replace Moll's preoccupation with calculating the savings she could make on the cost of a Minister and christening supper if the child died (171). Instead, we witness another powerful physical registration of her affinity with this son: "It touch'd my Heart so forcibly", she says, "to think of Parting entirely with the Child" (179). Ignoring the advice of the midwife, Moll also seeks out a nurse who will enact the role of an affectionate, attentive, and virtuous mother as strongly as possible:

> I promised her great Things if she would be kind to the Child, so she knew at first Word that I was the Child's Mother (183).

This search for a nurse - whose resemblance to the natural mother in her behaviour to the child is very obvious - once again reiterates the importance of an intimate mother-child relationship. What particularly draws attention to itself here, however, is that this intimacy is being demonstrated by Moll herself toward an illegitimate child she had dreamed of being rid of. Defoe's subsequent work of fiction about the life of another ambitious courtesan, *Roxana*, indicates the author's abiding interest in the theme of motherhood. Natural mothers, adoptive mothers, step-mothers, and related issues such as nursing and tenderness towards children similarly feature in *Roxana*. Roxana's ambiguous response towards many of her nine children figuratively powers this work.

In the same way that Moll metaphorically acquires a 'new' body after she declares her penitence and finds her son, Roxana recalls a changed sense of consciousness and metaphorically different physical presence when she begins a "new scene of life" (26, 83). This notion of changed physical being, of becoming "another body", coincides with a time near the beginning of her story when Roxana leaves her children and embarks upon a life as mistress and courtesan (3). It immediately follows dramatic demonstration of her grief at being parted from the five children abandoned by her dissolute first husband. After this, Roxana becomes a terrible mother. She has no affectionate feelings for, or desire to nurture, her own subsequent children. When Roxana's sixth daughter dies, her lack of concern is highlighted: she expresses only irritation at the waste of time and expense involved in the lying-in.(57) Roxana's new maternal role consists of ridding herself of each of her children as fast as she can. Her behaviour as a mistress is characterised by her outright denials when asked if she has any children. She privately confesses that she entertains no partiality for any of them: sometimes she expresses an intense loathing for individual children (97, 127, 202).

Roxana, however, shares Moll's disgust for the indiscriminate employment of wet-nurses: through this, as well as in the association of virtue with motherhood, a medicalised maternal ideal is reinforced (96). In addition to this, however, certain instances reveal the ambiguity inherent in Roxana's role as an immoral and unfeeling mother.[67] Roxana is barely in control of the tender behaviour she shows towards her children at times. During her affair with the prince, for instance, she constantly and successfully manages to conceal her background and identity from him, manipulating him into thinking she is in material want with "forced" tears (70). On another occasion, she coerces him into scraping a handkerchief down her face to 'prove' that she is not painted, an action which again suggests the significance of the body itself as evidence of truth and purity (86). Whilst Roxana employs this device to her advantage, she cannot contain all of the signs made by her body. Genuine signs later betray her sensibility through her response to praise of the prince's first son. She attempts neither to hide nor

[67] Roxana refers to bad nurses as "she-butchers."

to deny this, yet she is unusually unwilling to enlarge upon the exact nature of her feelings with the reader:

> ... it so closely touch'd me another way, that I could not refrain sighing, and sometimes tears; and one time in particular it so affected me that I could not conceal it from him (97).

Similarly ambiguous is Roxana's pleasure on her return to Italy, and to Amy and this child, after a prolonged absence in France. The expression of her feeling of joy, which is almost equal to Amy's display of sentiment, is carefully qualified: "Amy cried for joy when she saw me, and I almost did the same" (128). Later, when Amy discovers one of Roxana's eldest children working as a maid, Roxana's anxiety that Susan will find herself at the mercy of some profligate son of the house leads to interference through Amy. This intervention precipitates a series of events which nearly lead to Roxana's exposure before her unwitting husband. Roxana claims that she is "too tender a mother still, notwithstanding what I had done" to let Susan continue as a drudge (245). Roxana's reasons for secretly attempting to improve her daughter's life are explicitly juxtaposed here with an acknowledgement that she is also truly wicked. Strangely dissatisfied with the reports she receives from Amy, Roxana dons a Quaker disguise and at last takes the opportunity to see Susan for herself. The fear of discovery is not enough to explain Roxana's 'curiosity' about her daughter. Once again, the intimate relation between mother to child is highlighted as Roxana attempts to put into words her secret "inconceivable" pleasure at being able to kiss her "own flesh and blood" (346). Whilst Roxana has always been in full control of the way in which others perceive her, she is emphatic about the mysterious lack of conscious control which she experiences over this affection towards Susan. Her tone is one of surprise: "I thought I must have taken her in my arms and kissed her again a thousand times, whether I would or no" (347).

Shortly after Roxana takes the disguise of Quaker dress, she shows sympathy for an abandoned and poverty-stricken widow and four children. At this time, Roxana is

placed in the position of a 'mother'. The Quaker woman responds to her in the manner of an infant:

> ... she flew to me, and throwing her arms about my neck, 'Oh!' says she, 'thou hast almost killed me'. And there she hung, laying her head in my neck for half a quarter of an hour, not able to speak, but sobbing like a child that had been whipped (315).

The Quaker's response to Roxana mirrors the incident during which Susan, at the age of nineteen or twenty years, clung like a child about Amy's neck because she believed her to be her natural mother (333). The Quaker's action places Roxana in a symbolic maternal posture. At this point in the fiction, attention drawn to Roxana's feeling sensitivity and virtue corresponds with her portrayal as a feeling mother. Roxana's own commentary reinforces the expectation that these demonstrations of good mothering are evidence of her repentance. They are, as she puts it, forerunners of her penitence. In contrast to Moll, the suggestion that Roxana has undergone moral reform is undermined by her subsequent behaviour towards her children. A brief portrayal of Roxana as a reformed, virtuous and tender mother to her own children is dramatically displaced by the part she plays in the fate of her eldest daughter, Susan.

Susan has increasingly and publicly voiced her own suspicions about Roxana's position as her natural mother. Roxana stands to lose her disguise and means of financial aggrandisement if she acknowledges the truth of these assertions. Not long after Susan openly voices her suspicions, a strong intimation is made that Amy has murdered her, in order to prevent Roxana's exposure and the revelation of details about her past life which this would entail. Uncertainty is produced by this vacillation in the views we have of Roxana's behaviour towards her 'children', yet her involvement in Susan's murder does not absolutely define her position as an unnatural and appalling mother. Even after Susan's death, Roxana continues to provide the reader with an alternative view of the idea of motherhood which identifies the unmitigated virtue of the mother's body with the production and nurture of a child. Here, the same mother who is probably indirectly responsible for the murder of one daughter also secretly experiences

enormous pleasure when she is intimate and affectionate with another. Roxana remains conscious of a mysterious "strong inclination" which she feels towards another surviving daughter:

> ... yet it was a secret inconceivable pleasure to me when I kissed her to know that I kissed my own child, my own flesh and blood, born of my body, and whom I had never kissed since I took the fatal farewell of them all (346).

Roxana's description of positive attachment to her child is remarkably similar to that which underlies medical advice concerning childcare. Roxana identifies the source of her strong feelings towards her child in the mutuality of their bodies: this idea is very close to that which shows that maternal nurture is an obvious extension of a feeding process which is biologically ordained during pregnancy. In this way, Roxana's behaviour towards her children offers sustained evidence of alternative treatment of the mother's fertility, and of the relationship between her body, and that of her child.

Depictions of maternity are of central importance in *Moll Flanders* and *Roxana*, yet neither simply mirrors eighteenth-century medical representations of good mothering. Nor are these depictions proof of a straightforward migration to narrative fiction of medical representations of the mother's body. Indeed, in some sense, depictions of prostitutes who can deny and even murder their children, and yet who can also intermittently exhibit nurturing qualities, challenge the virtuous maternal ideal. Instead of portraying thoroughly wicked women whose roles as mothers are either non-existent or stereotypically terrible, both novels are characterised by uncertainty with regard to their representations of the mother's body and how it reveals its 'true' nature. At times, the 'natural' affinity between mother and child which was seen as the source of good mothering and social order is experienced by these prostitutes. In a sense, uncertainty inherent in the exploration of motherhood in these novels provides a challenge to two fundamental assertions made about maternity by the medical world. The first contradiction to the assertion is that the body of a prostitute is infertile, and usually incapable of producing live children. The second contrasts moral meaning with

the medical premise that what is observed concerning the body is naturally ordained, and therefore good. These texts present us with vacillating representations of mothers. They are both 'morally wicked' and spontaneously affectionate towards, and nurturing of, their children.

The best-selling nature of *Moll Flanders* and *Roxana*, and - I suspect - their colourful protagonists, have attracted the attention of many modern critics. Several of these have concluded that neither Roxana nor Moll evolves any kind of recognizably 'feminine' identity.[68] Could this be precisely because readers of eighteenth-century novels expected its preoccupation with women as subjects to produce a single, exemplary code? There is an obvious possible explanation for intermittent fictional displays of nurturing behaviour which could be readily associated with this view. It is that these were part of Defoe's attempt to 'feminise' otherwise masculine female characters by occasionally identifying them with a highly recognisable, larger-than-life womanly figure. Inevitably, this interpretation would have to ignore the problematic morality inherent, especially towards the end of *Roxana*, in these displays of feeling. It is surely the case that this is insufficient as an explanation for the subtle and suggestive quality of Defoe's treatment of an affinity between fictional mother and child. Moreover, in attempting to define 'masculine' and 'feminine' in such fixed ways, the unquestioning acceptance of a singular notion of femininity and sensibility could have fallen into what Keith May calls the paradox of historical activities.[69] May's concern is that the historian attempts to see the past with eyes that the past has, to a degree, created. In the light of the findings of this and earlier Chapters, this idea of reaching for a feminine stereotype is at odds with the subtle and serious exploration of a woman's gender-identity within these fictions.

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[68] Watt, op.cit., p.115; John Richetti, 'The Portrayal of Women in Restoration and Eighteenth-Century English Literature', in M. Springer, Ed. *What Manner of Woman*, (New York, 1977), p.88; Keith May, *Characters of Women in Narrative Literature*, (London,1981), p.37.

[69] May, op.cit., p.4.

iii. Fertility and Family Structure in *Clarissa.*

Richardson's second work of fiction, *Clarissa*, contributes an essential part of this study of how, and to what effect, maternity is portrayed in eighteenth-century narrative fiction.[70] There are those who would disagree with my proposal to include it here at all. McCormick, for example, disregards Clarissa's mother as a marginal figure who epitomises what is described as the secondary and trivialising treatment which motherhood receives in this work as a whole.[71] This claim rests upon Mrs Harlowe's absence from the dominant action because this fiction centres upon Clarissa's experience alone and outside Harlowe Place. Other historians of our time appear to agree. Some claim that the intricate representation of motherhood as a 'feminine' identity, and as one with a recognisable, complicated cultural and literary representation, evolves via a process which is exclusive to the fiction of the twentieth century.[72] The main effort of the rest of this Chapter will be to show how Mrs Harlowe's relationship with her daughter formed part of a pattern of images and representations of the female body, and its domestic role. Mrs Harlowe, Mrs Norton, and the various roles adopted by Clarissa herself, all contributed to an important domestic theme and, like other representations which have been discussed in this Chapter, their function was neither trivial, stereotypic, nor marginal. The nature of the mother's body, and its relation with that of the child, provide *Clarissa* with part of its central core.

The mother's body itself gains a crucial profile in *Clarissa* through the richness with which this work presents the reader with female characters whose status as woman,

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[70] *Cl.*

[71] McCormick, op.cit., p.12.

[72] See Ann Daly, *Inventing Motherhood*, (London, 1982), p.10; Nancy Chodorow, *The Reproduction of Mothering*, (London, 1978), p.217. Chodorow wholly ascribes the biological feeding relationship which underlies the modern practice of childcare, to Freudian psychoanalytic theory. Daniel Stern, *The First Relationship*, (London, 1977), p.37. An exception is provided by Elizabeth Badinter, *The Myth of Motherhood.* 1980; Tr. Roger de Garis, 2nd ed. (London, 1981), introduction, pp.xii-xiii. Badinter claims that sentimental intimacy between mother and child was a nineteenth century phenomenon: her research, however, is heavily based on French evidence, and does not examine English publications which predate Rousseau.

as mother, or as child is uncertain. In modern times, this has been interpreted as a feature which is unique to Clarissa, and which reveals her rejection of her own body; as such, it draws attention to her slow death because it reflects a stage of bodily regression akin to decomposition. Leo Braudy's work reinforces this idea. He regards Clarissa's confusion after the rape, and her illness and corresponding refusal to eat, as signs that her self-disgust makes her turn "more and more against her own body."[73] Dorothy Van Ghent's view is similarly anti-physical.[74] She identifies the promotion of sterility, as opposed to fertility, in Clarissa's embodiment. This may be due, in part, to Clarissa's early death, and to fluctuating views we receive of her throughout the main part of the action. At times, her partial adoption of child-like postures and status certainly lends support to Van Ghent's notion of what appears to be subversive, anti-domestic characterisation and meaning.

The exploration of fertility, however, as well as that of sterility, shapes and disrupts the reader's view of domestic organisation within *Clarissa.* To a considerable extent, the structure of this novel is provided by the uncertain possibilities of female physicality. Clarissa is, at once, a physically-mature woman, a non-mother, and a child, and it is never quite clear whether or not she has been raped by Lovelace, or even whether she is pregnant at the time of her death. These and other physical manifestations and treatment of maternal behaviour - which will shortly be explained in greater detail - are interleaved in ways which create tensions within *Clarissa.* These tensions served to oppose absolute moral meanings assigned to the bodies of a woman and her child.

Richardson identified a need to find a 'safe' role for the woman, in fiction, through assigning her the roles of 'mother' and non-mother to children. Until Clarissa's death, the uncertainty endemic in fluctuations between her presentation as a grown woman and as a child depend upon, and reinforce, apparently bipolar states of childhood and womanhood. Still more direct means of distinguishing the child's state of being, especially from that

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[73] Leo Braudy, 'Penetration and Impenetrability in Clarissa', in P. Harth, Ed. *New Approaches to Eighteenth Century Literature*, (London, 1974), p.191.
[74] Dorothy Van Ghent, *The English Novel: Form and Function*, (1953), 2nd ed., (London, 1953), p.60, in Eaves and Kimpel, op.cit, p.240.

of the woman, is in evidence in the note of concern which characterises one letter which Clarissa sends to Anna. In this, Clarissa distinguishes the two states of being.[75] She questions the "precise stature and age" at which a child should consider herself "absolved" from childhood duties (. 480). As we shall see, when Clarissa attempts to adopt a child's status herself, a sense of the mutual exclusivity of moral issues which surrounds each is sustained.

Clarissa displays "innocent confusion" whilst conducting her "angry struggle" against Lovelace, and this seems to be 'embodied' in the text by the substitution of her morally uncertain adult status, for that of a child (492). Such substitutions coincide with occasions when, for example, her status as an example of moral perfection is called into question. Shortly before her gruesome death, Mrs Sinclair taunts Clarissa with a reminder of the Church's teaching on suicide: "starving yourself is self-murder", she insists (1054). In doing so, Sinclair recalls for the reader earlier deliberate attempts which Clarissa made on her own life, and anticipates her confession to Anna of the way in which these rendered her "an imitator" of Lovelace (1116). Doubt surrounds Clarissa's morally perfect status on these occasions, not merely because Lovelace is attractive, but because Clarissa imitates him, and because she acknowledges that she entertains a genuine attachment for him.[76] Her determination to frustrate Lovelace's will, for instance, leads to an attempt to stab herself with a sharp knife .[77] Clarissa does more here than merely copy her abductor's wicked behaviour. The immediacy of the implications inherent in Sinclair's comment can only be imagined by the modern reader. So serious was the act of committing a mortal sin that subjecting the suicide's body to atrocities like dismemberment was not uncommon, even as late as the mid-nineteenth century.[78] Lovelace's letters to Belford echo these doubts concerning her behaviour. What is especially interesting here is that Clarissa is described as child-like in her

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[75] Patricia Meyer Spacks, *The Adolescent Idea*, (1981), 2nd ed., (London, 1982), p.92, argues that this definition of physical states is solely the product of reinforcing Clarissa's moral virtue.

[76] Richardson's anxiety about whether or not to make him less so necessitated numerous revisions to his character. See Eaves and Kimpel, op.cit., p.244.

[77] *Cl.*, p.950.

[78] Isaac Watts, *A Defense Against the Temptation to Self-Murther*, (London, 1726), p.48: Al Alvarez, *The Savage God: a Study of Suicide.* (London: 1971), p.42.

mimicry of him: she is, Lovelace believes, "a novice, an infant, in stratagem and contrivance" (74i).

Clarissa's own awareness of her attraction towards Lovelace poses perhaps the most serious threat to her moral status. The moral implications of this conscious positive feeling would have been all too obvious to a readership for whom an unprecedented choice in works of conduct was available at this time. Such conduct advice about courtship makes curious reading in the twentieth century, and for that reason, it is worth reiterating its warning at this point. Richardson's own 'Advice to Unmarried Ladies', which appeared in *The Rambler* (1751) fourteen months after the publication of *Clarissa* began, stresses that young women could not be allowed to entertain any positive feeling for a man without both parental permission, and the declared love of the man concerned.[79] Richardson does not mince his words over the importance of this convention. For a woman to foolishly ignore it would be "an Heterodoxy which Prudence, and even Policy, must not allow."[80] Before her abduction, however, Clarissa is quite unequivocal about her attachment to Lovelace: she claims that he is, at least, a man to be "preferred" to the repulsive Mr Solmes, and, despite her awareness of "all his preponderating faults", she confesses to Anna:

> I like him better than I ever thought I should like him; and, those faults considered, better perhaps than I *ought* to like him (185).

In contrast to such hints of Clarissa's growing attraction towards Lovelace, Lovelace's own description of Anna and Clarissa as "truly pious, and truly virtuous girls" serves to diminish their statures whilst explicitly affirming their sexual innocence (728). After Clarissa's abduction, however, she reiterates her continuing feelings of positive attachment to Lovelace. Clarissa is very clear about Anna's role as the provider of information about Lovelace's past, yet she warns her friend to "keep to yourself" any information she has concerning Lovelace's "disreputable" behaviour: Clarissa even

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[79] Richardson, 'Advice to Unmarried Ladies', in *The Rambler*, I (No. 97), (1751), Facs. ed. D.D. Eddy, Ed. (London, 1978). It is worth noting that Watt states that of all the numbers published of *The Rambler*, this one was the most popular.
[80] Ibid. p.575.

admits to "the indifference I pretended to on his account" (513, 507). Sometimes Clarissa contradicts this with an outright denial of any irrational positive attachment she may be harbouring, yet at others, both before and after the fire episode, she addresses him in anger, in a familiar way which is normally reserved for her closest friends, and for God. Ironically, her expression of hatred is also one of emotional attachment: she claims "from my heart I despise thee, thou very poor Lovelace" (950). Precisely this attachment has been alluded to on an earlier occasion, and Clarissa's recognition of their mutual feelings bears testimony to it:

> Why, sir, let us resolve to quit every regard for each other .... Let us resolve to quit every regard for each other that is more than civil (593).

Lovelace, too, draws the reader's attention to the inconsistency of Clarissa's reasoning, and to the question of her highly inappropriate regard for him. Is "the divine Clarissa", he demands, "capable of loving a man whom she ought not to love?" (428). Clarissa both declares and denies her guilt. In a letter to her father, she relies upon the absolving protection of a child's position, as she admits "I am an unworthy child - yet I am your child." Still more explicitly child-like is the picture we receive of Clarissa publicly refusing to marry the man who has been living under the same roof as her for weeks. Lovelace recounts, in a letter to Belford, how she asserts her will before 'Captain Tomlinson'. In the face of such a scandalous decision, her posture is clearly infantile:

> ... her charming face, as if seeking for a hiding-place (which a mother's bosom would have best supplied), sinking upon her own shoulder (844).

Soon after the fire episode, subtle suggestions are made which point to Clarissa's own possible pregnancy. The innkeeper's words of assurance to Lovelace that "She'll get over all these freaks if once she be a mamma" are later echoed in Lovelace's dreams of the birth of his child (, 766). Following a letter in which Clarissa is depicted imitating his act of deception, Lovelace's depiction of his own position as victim closely

recalls Clarissa's descriptions of herself: here, in an indirect way, the words "I am ruined, undone, blown-up, destroyed" also intimate her pregnancy (960). A letter between Mrs Harlowe and Mrs Norton speculates more openly about this unconfirmed "crime" (1156). Finally, Clarissa is questioned about it in the last letter she receives from her Uncle John. He is very direct about the matter of her expecting a child, as he demands "I ask you, if you have reason to think yourself with child by this villain?" (1192).

The unconfirmed speculation that Clarissa may be about to be a mother adds to the intricacies of this alternating depiction. On the surface, the vacillation between child and woman does appear to corroborate Braudy's view. Clarissa is, after all, exalted in the eyes of her eighteenth-century audience through her ultimate removal from the "contamination" of her adult body. Her position as a child can be seen as a stage in this process of rejection.[81] The way in which Clarissa turns against her own body, however, announces more than a mere rejection of the physical state. Her adoption of the alternating states of child and woman is a more delicate and convoluted process than Braudy's conclusion implies. This, in turn, is not a feature which is isolated from the concern which surrounds the nature of the female body in *Clarissa.* Contextually, it is closely associated with the treatment of Clarissa's mother and nurse. For this reason, the dilemma of the alternating status of woman and child in *Clarissa* is not thoroughly resolved by her death and rise to the status of saint, as Spacks has suggested it is.[82] Clarissa wastes away to her death whilst she is probably pregnant with Lovelace's child. The alternations of her physical status can be seen as part of an exploration of female physicality and fertility in *Clarissa*. The whole work is lent structure by this theme: constant material changes in Clarissa's physical form permeate.

At the same time as different bodily forms are adopted in conjunction with moral uncertainty, Clarissa's repeated exchange between the two also draws or merges these states together. This merging cannot be adequately explained by the possibility that this somehow represents an uncertain state of adolescence. Instead, the 'merging'

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[81] Cynthia Griffin Wolff, *Samuel Richardson and the Eighteenth Century Puritan Character*, (Hamden, Conn., 1972), p.46; Braudy, op.cit., p.197.
[82] Meyer Spacks, op.cit., p.92.

effect which is produced by constant alternations of status can be seen as part of a complex dynamic concerned with the natural organisation of the domestic within *Clarissa*. The size of Clarissa's body becomes increasingly impossible to determine: its shape, maturity, and corresponding role are rendered indistinct. She is referred to by Colonel Morden as "a woman of virtue and character" and, several letters later, as "my child" by Mrs Harlowe (1279, 1324). Clarissa herself contributes to this uncertainty by referring to her status as a "poor girl" and a "poor child" (1200, 1122). In tandem with this is the diminishing space around her, as she moves up further flights of stairs into smaller, increasingly stifling rooms. Belford's detailed description of the horrific place in which Clarissa dies contributes to this sense of her growing confinement:

> A horrid hole of a house, in an alley they call a court; stairs wretchedly narrow, even to the first-floor rooms .... The windows dark and double-barred, the tops boarded up to save mending; and only a little four-paned eylet-hole of a casement to let in air; more, however, coming in at broken panes than could come in at that (1064).

Finally, her body is quickly sealed into the coffin which has been manoeuvred with difficulty, at her request, up the narrow stairs which lead to these cramped attic lodgings (1370). All of this environmental detail helps to confuse our impression of Clarissa's physical presence. A further contribution is made by the suggestion of physical decomposition contained in her references to dreams, and in her threats about her own burial. In one instance, Clarissa warns Lovelace to "dig a hole deep enough to cram in and conceal this unhappy body" (911). Clarissa's disrupted papers - such as the incoherent paper IX (893) - add to the distorted vision we have of her, as do other examples of her incomplete language (333, 1009, 1348). The merging of the two states of womanhood and childhood draws attention to, yet renders less certain, the idea of their mutuality. In tandem with this is Lovelace's fantastic vision of Clarissa breastfeeding twins. The imagined scene which he describes to Belford, which shows Clarissa descending from "goddess-hood into humanity" by feeding her infants, appears to symbolise a problem inherent in the idealised view of pure, virtuous mothering. Lovelace powerfully recalls

the colours and functions of the gestating and sexual female body as it nurtures an infant:

> I now, methinks, behold this most charming of women in this sweet office, pressing with her fine fingers the generous flood into the purple mouths of each eager hunter by turns: her conscious eye now dropped on one, now on the other, with a sigh of maternal tenderness; and then raised up to my delighted eye, full of wishes, for the sake of the pretty varlets, and for her own sake, that I would deign to legitimate; that I would condescend to put on the nuptial fetters (706).

Lovelace's image combines a strong sense of sexual attractiveness and allure with the representation of ideal and natural mothering. This single image epitomises what manifests itself in a number of ways. Distortion characterises presentations of maternal behaviour and the medically-justified maternal role. Moral meaning which is associated with mother and child is both exploited and exposed here. The context within which Clarissa's character and virtue are explored is one which quietly defies the maternal ideal. Within it, other critical mother-child relationships are disrupted and even inverted. This context, and the merging of Clarissa's identities - which can be interpreted as a symbolic representation of bodily origin, or gestation - mean that this work of fiction offers several possibilities for this study of representations of mothers.

Interwoven with the alternations in Clarissa's bodily form are illustrations of the infant Clarissa, and her 'mothers'. Clarissa is endowed with and seeks out the 'sanctuary' which a child's status affords. At the same time Mrs Harlowe and Mrs Norton provide a focus for ideas concerned with maternity, which are conveyed in terms of the physical proximity between the woman's body and the child's domain. After Clarissa's removal from Harlowe place, these two women are frequently together when discussed. Mrs Harlowe, for instance, will not consider visiting her daughter at the glovemaker's unless accompanied by Mrs Norton. At a time when scores of books were published about infant care and feeding, it is Mrs Norton - Clarissa's wet-nurse -

who is most strongly identified with 'natural' motherhood.[83] There are some important differences between other means of exploring the ideal maternal role through a substitute, and through this view which we have of Mrs Norton as Clarissa's wet-nurse. One of these is that Mrs Norton and Mrs Harlowe are co-present on several occasions. Despite this, Mrs Norton is seen as having provided the nurture for Clarissa in a way which is strictly regarded as the natural mother's domain in medical writings, unless the mother has died or there an exceptionally good reason for requiring a wet-nurse. Because breastfeeding by the biological mother alone is seen as the 'natural' means by which the 'purity' of the child must be ensured, Mrs Norton's function as the woman who imbues Clarissa with her virtuous character at an early age must be regarded as an unorthodox and even subversive characterisation.

Tensions which exist between all three contribute to the uncertainty surrounding an indeterminate sense of the female body, and raise questions about the nature of the maternal role itself. Ambiguity concerning the female physical form is inherent even in comments made by one woman to the other. There is, claims Mrs Harlowe on one occasion, a physical affinity between "women-grown girls" and children. Richardson's illustration of Clarissa's relationship with her own mother and Mrs Norton can be seen as part of the pattern of vacillation between bodily 'identities' which draw attention to themselves in this text. The author probes the complexities of the relationship between physical separation, and symbolic unification of woman and child.

Clarissa's relationship with her 'natural' mother is conducted at a distance. Her daughter's use of the term 'child', in letter four, confidently assumes that the child's obligations to her family are unequivocally fixed. Mrs Harlowe's use of it, however, in letter seven, introduces an element of ambivalence. Mrs Harlowe's reference to a child, as a term implying allegiance, is understood in conjunction with her husband's response to his daughter. It is, at best, manipulative. When Clarissa's family announce their plan to marry her to Mr Solmes, her father distances himself from her with his half-hearted utterance:

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[83] Roy and Dorothy Porter, *In Sickness and in Health*, (London, 1988), p.80.

> They all kept their seats. I ran to papa, and kneeled; then to my mamma; and met from both a cold salute; from my papa a blessing but half-pronounced; my mamma, indeed, embraced me not with her usual ardour (59).

The structural balance within the second sentence evokes the uncomfortable emotional distance which each maintains from Clarissa. They are removed from their daughter by their collusion, and their insistence upon patriarchial order. The syntactical function of Mrs Harlowe's reference to her 'child' means that it merely mirrors her husband's dissociation from their wilful daughter. A lack of compatibility emerges between Clarissa's view of a child's special position within the domestic structure, and her family's view.

In the meantime Mrs Norton serves as a representative of, and substitute for, the sort of maternal behaviour which is celebrated in eighteenth-century medical texts. She comes close to assuming a biological maternal role. Mrs Norton is lent, and claims responsibility for, Clarissa's physical being and self. Whilst Clarissa appeals to her mother with the words "I am your child" and "your poor suffering girl", the nurturing maternal role which is outlined in eighteenth-century medical texts in the form of pictorial representations of the dissected uterus is, instead, attributed to her nurse. Mrs Harlowe herself declares that the milk supplied to Clarissa when she was an infant endowed her with "many of her excellencies" (584).

This is particularly pertinent in the light of advice such as that of Richard Steele, and perhaps more significantly, of Dr Cadogan. Their work, amongst many others, had received much acclaim: Cadogan's essay was fast becoming a best-seller only a few months before the appearance of the first volumes of *Clarissa.* In these, the practice of putting children out to nurse is condemned because of the risk of the nurse's passing bad traits of character, amongst other evils, to the infant. Good traits, it is argued, can only be assured if the biological mother feeds the child herself. Clarissa's disrupted life is symbolised by the subversive way in which Mrs Harlowe's praise momentarily makes Mrs Norton indistingishable from the nurturing maternal paragon. These words challenge the idea that goodness and virtue are only transmitted from the natural mother

to her child. In her final letter to Clarissa, Mrs Norton makes this identification with natural motherhood still more explicit: she warmly refers to her longing to "fold my dear precious young lady to my fond, my more than fond, my maternal bosom" (1365).

By way of contrast, the image of Mrs Harlowe's "natural way" of 'feeding' her child is pictorially represented as a complete distortion of this harmonious nurture of the child.[84] Mrs Harlowe speaks with nostalgia of her youngest daughter:

> In her bosom, young as she was, could I repose all my griefs - sure of receiving from her prudence, advice as well as comfort (584).

The position of biological mother as provider is entirely inverted by this image: it is Mrs Harlowe, here, who is shown gaining strength and succour, whilst reclining at her daughter's breast. Mrs Harlowe's physical relation with her daughter is constantly depicted through images of separation. In keeping with this, their close physical proximity here produces a distortion of the 'natural' picture of mother and child. Ironically, the medical commentators of the period would have regarded Mrs Norton's role as the unnatural one, and would have sharply criticised this substitution.

Representations of maternal traits and behaviour are regularly distorted, inverted and rendered uncertain. Clarissa's death only augments the way in which the whole work articulates incomplete, frustrated and distorted views of issues surrounding maternity because her putative child is unborn. In *Clarissa*, maternal representations overlap a dominant theme of family order. Whilst the Harlowe family is itself rocked and temporarily disrupted by disagreement over Clarissa's commercial value, however, the treatment of maternity itself is never resolved in a way which parallels the restoration of Harlowe family harmony after Clarissa's burial. The Harlowes retain their wealth: the fates of their various marriages nevertheless reflect some of the contradictions in Clarissa's lengthy, 'forgiving' will. Although order of a sort is restored, nevertheless a dire prophetic warning remains about the importance of,

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[84] See *E.N.M.C.*, p.36.

amongst other things, the value of the mother. An intricate, uncertain, and fractured sense of a mother's identity also prevails.

In conclusion, the presence of the mother in eighteenth-century fiction was an important one. Some aspects of the fictional mother's behaviour and role appeared to conform to the ideal of the mother as depicted in medical writing. Narrative fiction did not, however, provide a place for the unambiguous definition and depiction of this role. The mother issue was subtly disrupted and challenged within the same texts. The presentation of mothers and of maternity was significantly more intricate than is allowed by modern commentaries on the subject of eighteenth-century fictional women, including those of Flynn, Pratt and McCormick.[85] The mother's imaginative portrayal does not resolve our view of a domestic ideal. Concentrated within the contradictions and alternatives which are offered was the confusion which surrounded eighteenth-century society's understanding of motherhood.

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I would like to conclude as precisely and succinctly as possible. There are five points to reiterate by way of a wider conclusion. They seem to be the most interesting, central, and at times the most equivocal findings and concerns of my study of the popular representation of maternity during the eighteenth century. The presentation of mothers has plenty to contribute to a wider current exploration of the eighteenth-century cultural consciousness, for which women and ideas of femininity were very significant.

The first point I want to stress is that maternity was of crucial importance in eighteenth-century narrative fiction. This is hardly surprising in the light of the preoccupation, in this fiction, with women as subjects. Their individuality and the ways in which they secured happy domestic lives, were often major topics. What is difficult to explain, however, is why significant mother-figures did not feature more prominently in my selection of twenty-one works of narrative fiction written by women. In works of

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[85] Flynn, op.cit., p.65; Annis Pratt, *Archetypal Patterns in Women's Fiction*, (Brighton, 1982), p.168; McCormick, op.cit., p.3. I use the term '*modern*' here to mean the second half of the twentieth century.

fiction which lack the obvious physical presence of a mother-figure, her absence was often a charged one. In others, motherhood was an integral part of the work as a whole, and the power and ambiguities surrounding the subject of maternity was subtly, anxiously, and perhaps even subversively probed.

My findings do not wholly accord with certain feminist approaches to the history of women's relationship with literature; this seems to have a lot to do with the many different things which feminist has come to mean. Some critics, such as Spender and Beasley, might remark that my concentration, especially in the last Chapter, upon male writers, conflicts with the idea that fiction is a place where women writers have defined themselves, and enscribed a female gender-identity.[86] My exploration also draws attention to another possibility, one which might be seen as broadly feminist by other commentators. Inconsistencies in and alternatives to a domestic ideal were sometimes introduced. Questions are raised about their potential as subversive features which challenged the domestic role of mothers as prescribed by medical and conduct literature. My approach has been to avoid the vexed question of what the sex of the author meant to the writing because it has recently been amply explored in, for instance, Gilbert's and Gubar's comprehensive work, *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979), and in Jane Spencer's probing commentary, *The Rise of the Woman Novelist* (1986).[87] Instead, I have approached a selection of texts on account of their content, and have found the fictions of both male and female pens contributed to a complex process of writing, disrupting and reinscribing femininity.

There is much evidence to suggest that the eighteenth-century medicalisation of motherhood influenced the popular imagination and migrated into various forms of popular literature in different ways. Despite this, the idea that by the end of the century the maternal ideal was firmly embedded in 'middle-class' culture because of its direct migration into forms of literature, oversimplifies its treatment in these literary forms.

Narrative fiction has been highlighted by a number of twentieth-century critics as a form which offers much evidence of the direct route which medical findings took

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[86] Dale Spender, *Mothers of the Novel*, (London, 1986); Beasley, op.cit.
[87] Gilbert and Gubar, op.cit.; Jane Spencer, *The Rise of the Woman Novelist*, (Oxford, 1986).

into the popular imagination. This is sometimes regarded as the historical precursor to depictions of virtuous, feeling mothers whose human status was both precarious and very close to superhuman in some Victorian fiction. My findings do not wholly agree with this view of eighteenth-century popular fiction: it did not simply commune with medical writings in a production of a female ideal. Because the fictional treatment of maternity was characterised by ambiguity, it cannot be seen as having provided a solid foundation for nineteenth-century fictional depictions of maternity. In addition to this, the variety of eighteenth-century fictional representations of the maternal body highlights certain features and qualities of the form of narrative fiction itself. Some of these do not seem to have received much critical attention. One of these is that narrative fiction cannot be used in the same way as certain other historical documents because it did not only mimic the culture out of which it arose. Narrative fiction was not merely a repository for ideas. Nor can fiction be seen as an escape from cultural concerns; it was too speculative and inquisitive about the preoccupations of its society to be defined as such. In a sense, fiction addressed the ambiguities and anxieties which surrounded the eighteenth-century understanding of the female body.

There are many examples of narrative fiction which reflect its ability to accommodate cultural concerns such as the uncertain nature of the female body, and its role in an evolving social order. This ability, however, has been described by some - including Watt, Pratt and Probyn - as a powerful and individual feature of fiction. It is, they argue, what makes fiction special. My final point is that this study of the convergence and divergence of conduct literature and narrative fiction has drawn attention to links between the two which have largely been overlooked in explorations of the extent to which fiction had its roots in conduct literature, and shared a similar moral purpose. Fiction was not totally independent of, or even separable from, conduct literature in certain ways which had little to do with the explicit educational intention of each. Both contributed to a process of creating a view of maternity which had certain mythic characteristics: their treatment of maternity also demystified the woman's body and her role. Both assimilated *and* suggested alternatives to the idealised mother as each sought to express, order and explore the nature and behaviour appropriate to a woman.

Flynn's interpretation of the treatment of women's bodies in narrative fiction - which is that they were perceived as being difficult to manage and requiring containment within a domestic environment - is, in a sense, in opposition to my own view. In contrast, my findings point towards the importance of a relationship between a perceived natural female body, and her corresponding role in the home. Ironically, in spite of the divergence of our interpretation, Flynn's words - that the eighteenth-century world was "confused about the domesticity it purports to value" - seem most fitting as a summary of this study of the nature and patterns of the popular treatment of maternity during the period.[88]

[88] See footnote 31.

FRONTISPIECE.

Pag. 18 – A large Snake on a ſudden ſtarted up from amongſt ſome long gra[ss] coiled itſelf round little Tommy's leg.

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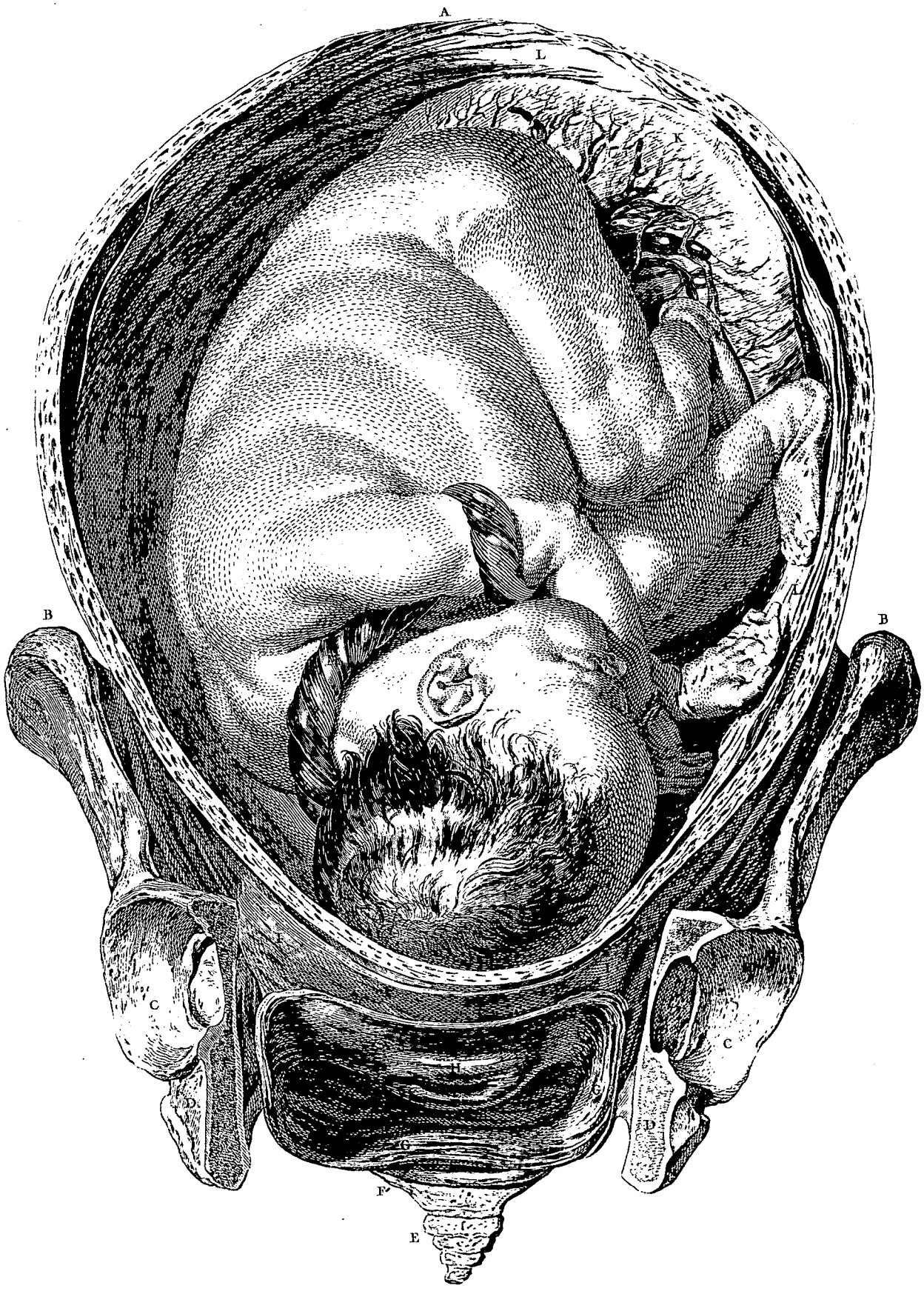
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